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# SPIRATION

J. HERBERT WILLIAMS.

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INSPIRATION





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# INSPIRATION

BY

J. HERBERT WILLIAMS

Quis haec scripserit, valde supervacaneae quaeritur, quum tamen auctor libri Spiritus Sanctus fideliter credatur. Ipse igitur haec scripsit QUI SCRIBENDA DICTAVIT.—S. GREGORIUS MAGNUS, *De consensu Evangelii*, I., i. c. 35.

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## PREFACE

THE *Providentissimus Deus* of Leo XIII. directs attention to the work of the earliest

**Patristic** Fathers of the Church in the exposition  
**and** tion of Holy Scripture, beginning  
**Scholastic.** with immediate disciples of the Apostles, St Clement of Rome, Sr. Ignatius of Antioch, and including such famous names as Cyril, Chrysostom, Origen, Augustine, Jerome. The authority of these early Fathers is pre-eminent, not only for their learning but for their sanctity, which suggests that they may possess a divine illumination. We are also to perceive that "a new and more abundant (*laetiora*) growth" belonged to the Scholastics of seven centuries later, and to St Thomas of Aquinum beyond all. The work the Scholastics inaugurated was of a special character. Distinction of the meanings of words, their precise theological significance, the design of the sacred writer, the connection of his argument, were matters considered and explained. With the

revival of Greek, the ancient codices were sought up and edited, the text of Scripture was critically determined, the aid of multifarious learning was enlisted in elucidation. The generation following the Council of Trent "saw the golden age of the Fathers (*nobilissima Patrum aetas*) almost returned."

A various style is clamant in the bare description. Either kind was required, and each had its own excellence. But in the **Modern development.** Patristic age there was freshness and freedom and devotional inspiration. Later the study was more scientific, for theologians rather than for the general public; not less valuable for its scientific character, more valuable, but losing in attractiveness for the lay mind. Theological science, thus perfected, is grown a clerical preserve and avoided by lay intelligence. Unless expressed in the Scholastic terminology and observing the Scholastic distinctions, theology is disallowed. This is a mistake. The trees of the Paradise of God are according to the natural growth, not pollard, not cut into shapes of human design. St Augustine of Hippo or St Thomas of Aquinum are as the grace of God caused them to grow. Let the Catholic repudiate everything that is contrary to the Divine Tradition. But let him not find fault because the expression is un-

accustomed.<sup>1</sup> The spirit is the living thing, when the letter is dead and disregarded.

It goes without saying that neither the Patristic nor the Scholastic style is within the compass of the chance writer. But **Literary presentment.** there is still the choice between a scientific and a literary treatment of the subject, between writing for the learned and for seminaries, and writing for the general reader. The general reader, it should be observed, is not the good Catholic, nor yet the Catholic *sans phrase*. The aim must be, in such *literary* work, to interest first and to influence, if it may be, after. And orthodoxy is no recommendation; only, if unobtrusive, it may pass. The hazard must be ventured of the book being suspect with the self-styled theologian, who turns over the pages, and his eye fails to catch the received and regular turn of phrase. There is ironical statement or indirect allusion in a literary presentment, which are unrecognised, and the conclusion is taken for serious which is *petitio principii* writ large.

But the consequence is inevitable. A paragraph here and a paragraph there, which are not as usually reasoned, which appear to have

<sup>1</sup> To say that Christ "died for men" is ordinary and goes unnoticed: but that He "perished for humanity" creates alarm; it is socialist; it would have been better unsaid.



an erroneous sense, cannot be excised or amended. The style is possibly not the man, but it certainly is the treatise.

Picturesque on the side of the coomb stands the cottage. You make it more orthodox if you remove the thatch and point the stones. But it ceases to be a coomb cottage. No one turns his steps that way any longer to view it.

There is opportunity, or should be, in religious literature for other than the best work; not only

**Apologetic.** books that are text-books, books of reference, and that are recognised as authoritative in their subject for long future years. Something less perfect, something with which there is fault to find, ephemeral, evanescent, has its place besides, and for its very imperfection exercises a greater influence in the formation of opinion. It is more on the level of the reader and speaks his language. It is human in its mistakes and in its foolish manner of speech.

For the security of the Catholic there is always existent the tradition of the faith.

**Limits of admissible error.** Nothing must conflict with that, and every opinion that will not square with it is at once outlawed. But surely a *distinguo* enters into such general proposition. If no writing is to be tolerated unless faultless, nothing will be written. The

greatest Saints and Doctors have written error—St Augustine, it is said, St Jerome, St Gregory of Nyssa or of Nazianzum. Much more must writers of our less intellectual and less spiritual age. Moreover, the judgment of the reader is liable to error no less than the intelligence of the writer; the volunteer critic, it may be, is not better informed than the author. The *distinguo*, then, is between plain and direct contradiction of the doctrine of the Church on the one hand, and on the other an imagined divergence from theological opinion, however general, however commonly prevailing, which remains opinion, and is not yet embodied in any instrument of obligation. Once we pass beyond the confines of Catholic tradition, or have arrived on its outer border, there is no assurance either in assertion or rejection. Let divergence that there appears be argued, and one or other version be disproved. But without offence taken.

Another palpable distinction concerns the difference of the writer and consequently of the design. When a Bishop writes anything, he anticipates that his words will be received with submission. Or when a Theologian of name and eminence issues a fresh dissertation, what he writes will be taken to be the authorised account of the

**Difference  
of design.**

matter, and he is himself aware of that consequence.

But there will be loss of force if only Bishops and Theologians of name and eminence are ever to utter a word. If religious faith is our supreme interest and concern, we should wish to hear what anyone of our society is thinking on questions that occupy our own thoughts. In the free interchange of ideas, saving the articles of the faith, there is growth and expanse of devotion. Even it was under such condition that the articles of the faith in the first centuries received their determination.

On the other hand, if the reading public is indifferent to religion, or of heretical wilfulness, what chance has the Bishop or Professor of being ever read? The only chance is for the writer of book or paper to be neither Bishop nor Professor.

The ordinary writer does not write in any sense of the term dogmatically; he says what he thinks, and expects to find some to agree with him, and others not to agree. If anyone holds the same opinion, it is not because the writer expressed it; what he writes is for the reader to consider, and does not pretend to be believed on the writer's bare word. Let the Bishop or the Theologian of name and eminence make the smallest mistake on that outer border-



land, there is danger of its being taken into the creed. There is no such danger with the ordinary writer. Let him write, with the reservation that has been made, what is grafted in his mind and spirit, on the topic he has made his own. Faults that are found are forgiven, when sincerity is not of word alone but of conviction.

Nevertheless, the writer of the volume herewith presented is hopeful of his having observed the consensus of Catholic teaching on the subject he has taken in hand, and if in any particular he is astray, submits himself beforehand fully and unreservedly to the judgment of the Church.

J. HERBERT WILLIAMS.



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# INSPIRATION

## INTRODUCTION

THE last eighty years have been distinguished by a large and accelerating progress in scientific knowledge. This character of the **Modern** age has filled the eye in consequence **scientific** of the application to general use **advance.** and enjoyment of many of the discoveries that have been made. I send a message not by hand nor coach nor other means of locomotion. I do not even need a connecting wire. I commit it to space and it goes. Or I need not make it a message; I talk with my correspondent many miles away and hear his voice in reply. There were in old days occasional hare-brained originals who had invented a flying machine, and gave two or three exhibitions before they broke their necks. Now the aerial carriages convey from one country to another, numbers of them, though the travellers still break their necks sometimes.

These things—and plenty more besides—seem so wonderful, and knowledge has evidently

**Not in** advanced by such big strides, that  
**mental** deficiencies are hidden from our  
**science.** view. It is not imagined that there

is any other sort of science apart from that which is at the flood. But in spiritual knowledge, knowledge of the mind, we have meanwhile stagnated, if it should not rather be said that we have gone back. The age of that scientific evolution was not materialist, as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it was democratic. Mental and spiritual privilege was as repulsive as social distinction or hereditary wealth. What my intelligence could not grasp, what was beyond my knowledge and experience, I would accept no man's warrant for. If any extraordinary spiritual perceptions or mental faculties exist, I should possess them. But I do not possess them. Therefore they do not exist. The age was "morbidly impatient of the supernatural."

Consequently this sort of science was not pursued at all, was not deemed worth while;

**Popular** no investigations were attempted  
**reaction.** nor experiments made. The proper study of mankind was not man but

radium. It was an unnatural attitude, and the reaction, the repudiation of the physical autoc-



racy, was long in coming, but sooner or later come it must. The general mind refuses to be shut out by senatorial enactment from an entire class of subjects for reflection, and mankind in all ages and among all its tribes has hungered and thirsted after knowledge of the supra-sensible universe. Is there another world than this; are there powers and faculties permitted to our nature more than those of which the generality are conscious?<sup>1</sup>

With the reaction, fresh discoveries were yearly made of things that were popularly known two hundred years before, but laid on the shelf and forgotten by the generations intervening. One of these discoveries it will be germane to consider.

Writing is consequent upon the invention of language, and perhaps belongs to it. Nevertheless it is a step beyond. In oral speech, before writing is known, the ideas to which expression is given are generally those of the moment. A

<sup>1</sup> "Metaphysics, τὰ μεταφυσικά," was the name given to one of the chapters in Aristotle's philosophical system, because in the order of compilation it came next to Physics, μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. A modern English philosopher tried to change the name to "Metempirics," i.e., "posterior to experience," meaning that the philosophy that endeavoured to extend itself beyond the natural and sensible world was altogether visionary, resting on no solid experimental ground, but beginning where verification ended.

has something to say to B, and B replies to A's accosting. But when writing is done, there is opportunity for deliberation, and ideas may be fetched from past experience or obtained by reflection, without their having been in the writer's mind when he first took pen and paper. It is the same with prepared speech, as distinguished from casual conversational exchange. The art of writing has been discovered before making a speech is possible, that is to say, the mind has acquired the faculty of connecting its ideas into sentences and of relating its sentences to one another.<sup>1</sup>

Besides ordinary writing, there is another species that differs in some particulars. The abnormal method of literary composition does not derive its ideas from conscious reflection

<sup>1</sup> There is a kind of prepared speech which is in the form of aphorism and obtained by reflection and thought, though not needing to be written down—said to be common in the cultivation of Oriental philosophising. One philosopher meditates long days and evolves the proposition that "the Good is the All." A second philosopher takes this proposition and meditates long days and improves upon it—"The Good is the All and Indivisible." It is questionable, however, whether the mind is capable of this fructification before writing is invented; even if the philosopher has not the materials for writing at hand, he belongs to a mental development that writing has introduced into his world. To be really anterior to writing the aphorism is not deeply reflective. As the "philosophy" of the shepherd in *As you Like It*, Act iii., Sc. 2.

and thought, but the ideas originate independently in the writer's mind, or rather he is not conscious of any ideas, but only words to express them emerge into his consciousness, without his knowing the sense of what he writes while the writing proceeds.

**Abnormal  
writing.**

The process is much the same as when writing is done from the dictation of another,<sup>1</sup> except that there is no audible utterance; of where the words and ideas come from the writer may have no knowledge, only he knows that they do not belong to his conscious intelligence at the time.

The faculty is not possessed by everyone, but rather is exceptional and rare, just as, *e.g.*, an abnormal memory is rare, that kind of memory which can repeat a column of a newspaper after once reading it through. There have always, of course, been fraudulent pretenders to the possession of the faculty, just as there are people who fraudulently lay claim to the miraculous gift of healing diseases by word or touch. But there should be no great difficulty in detecting and distinguishing the fraudulent pretender from the true abnormal writer.

The writer himself can have no possibility of

<sup>1</sup> See the quotations from Philo, below, Chap. X., p. 219.



mistaking. The writing is altogether different in experience. If he has any doubt whether the ideas and words are really "heard," it is certain that they are not "heard." The sensation is unmistakable. Anyone who has ever "heard," knows it to be quite a different thing from ideas occurring to the mind in ordinary writing.

The recognition of lost arts of human intelligence, superior to ratiocination as that to sensible information, of which the  
**Its evidence.** faculty of abnormal writing is one —this effect of the modern anti-materialist reaction does not possess the same interest for the "metempirical" school, for those who give a scientific name to every mystery and pretend therewith to have explained it, who speak of telepathy, of unconscious cerebration, of hyper-neurotic energy, and who look to discover presently the principle of life itself, and to assist in the creative labours of Mother Nature. Such philosophers are the same who refuse to the investigation of the phenomena of sanctity and of miracle the critical method and investigation which they laboriously bestow upon the discrimination of natural forces and new elements within the physical world. With such we are not concerned.

But the faculty is to be pronounced nothing

new or strange, the faculty of abnormal writing. It was familiar to the benighted age of St Thomas of Aquinum or to the yet more benighted age of St Augustine of Hippo.<sup>1</sup> Those times are said not to contribute any evidential value, because of being ignorant and uneducated and superstitious, when no one knew about the tides and  $\pi$  was no more than a letter. But at least in those times moral and metaphysical philosophy was studied as it is not in our age of enlightenment. The question of present interest to ourselves has become whether we are capable as human beings of possessing other faculties beyond those generally experienced, whether the exercise of the five senses is our only source of knowledge. The age of our immediate progenitors refused to consider the question; our own age deems their attitude unphilosophical. We naturally turn back to ages that admitted the existence of spiritual phenomena, when the materialist philosophy we have around us has become as Dead Sea ashes.

The faculty of abnormal writing, then, exists—or let it be existent only as scientific hypothesis, if the evidence is not allowed, if some refuse

<sup>1</sup> The extant writings of “the pseudo-Dionysius” are determined by Eucken (*Die Lebensanschauungen der grossen Denker*) to be “undoubtedly of the fifth century.”

to depart from the postulate that seeing alone is believing, that there is nothing in heaven and earth but what is dreamt of in the philosophy of physical science. The knowledge—or the

**As** hypothesis—of the existence of the **regarding** abnormal species of writing must **Inspiration.** be of service in relation to our belief in the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, when we are called upon to acknowledge that the Sacred Books composing the Canon are not like ordinary writings nor composed under the same conditions. At any rate our view is enlarged; there is another manner of writing to be considered; the inspiration of the sacred writers need not be in connection with the normal, but might be with the abnormal, method. Both methods exist; it is arbitrary to select one for consideration and exclude altogether the other; it could only be the course adopted if there was believed to be only one; now that there are acknowledged or hypothesised to be two, both of them must be taken into account.

What is intended by Inspiration may be a Divine Influence, operating upon the mind of the writer—*mentes Tuorum visita, accende lumen sensibus*. But, alternatively, Inspiration may operate when the mind is removed from activity; the simple and all-sufficing account



may be that the Divine Influence is then the source of hearing in the writing. This latter alternative may be deemed less ambiguous and more easy to understand; the Inspiration is then beyond question continuous and complete; it is "plenary"; the mind of the writer can hardly contribute anything of its own, since, in the supposed case, it is not consciously concerned.

If writing by Inspiration takes place under the conditions of abnormal writing, there is no kind of suggestion that the two have therefore anything necessarily in common; that one who can write by hearing is an inspired writer in his degree, and on the road towards the attainment of St James or St Jude; nor yet does it impugn the unique character of the gift of Inspiration, as though the Evangelists were persons possessed of the faculty of "hearing," only in measure beyond others. Inspiration is (suppose) a Divine Influence operating upon the mind of the writer, who writes otherwise in the ordinary manner. Or Inspiration is a Divine Influence operating under the conditions of abnormal writing. In the one case writing by Inspiration is not the same thing as ordinary writing. Nor in the other is it the same thing as abnormal.

Inspiration is a thing apart, *sui generis*, not

to be paralleled with anything else.<sup>1</sup> Writing by Inspiration may—most probably—be after a manner with which we are still entirely unacquainted, which was only known to the inspired writers themselves. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” But the notion of another manner of writing, appropriated to Inspiration, outside of all and every other experience, is surely made more possible to form, when we have already got more than one manner, the ordinary and the abnormal as well, before Inspiration is considered.

The various choice is threefold. First, whether writing by Inspiration is on the basis of ordinary writing or on the basis of the abnormal. If that alternative is refused, it is because only the ordinary is admitted; the discussion, it is said, is one of grave solemnity on the most sacred of themes; it is shocking and profane to consider at all in such connection any extraneous hypothesis; it is not a matter

<sup>1</sup> When poets, sculptors, musicians, etc., are said to be “inspired,” it is analogously, not intending anything whatever of the inspiration of a prophet or evangelist. And there is no other condition belonging to any other function or operation that is to be so named univocally. The ex-cathedra utterance of the Pope is infallible equally as an inspired writing. But such utterance of the Pope is not an inspired utterance.

to reason about but to accept in faith without understanding. But the abnormal writing is there, and it is already reasoning when we refuse to consider it. If, then, the choice is between one manner and another being employed by the sacred writers, the likelihood of one or the other has next to be estimated, whether it appears more in accordance with the situation that the higher influence and control of Inspiration should be exercised over the abnormal manner. Or the third choice is that, inasmuch as the abnormal manner of writing exists, different and apart from the ordinary manner, there is no reason why writing by Divine Inspiration should not have its own method, different and apart from both.

It need not be any longer that an Apostle or Evangelist is inspired, but that his writing is by Inspiration;<sup>1</sup> the ideas he expresses, the words he writes, are not his own. The argument is *a fortiori* in the supremest degree. In the abnormal writing the words and ideas are not consciously those of the writer at the time. Is there any initial difficulty, then, in believing Holy Scripture to be rightly entitled the Word

<sup>1</sup> The argument is that of the learned Cardinal Franzelin. See below, Chap. X., p. 214.

of God, because its words are the words of God? Now, in sober, rational, logical consideration, is there? Given the fact of the existence of abnormal writing? Or given the hypothesis?



## CHAPTER I

### THE CANON

How is the Canon of Holy Scripture formed, and more particularly, as more easily within our view, how is the Canon of the New Testament? That is to say, not **The nett question.** what is the historical authority, and where is it to be discovered, for the inclusion of the several books,<sup>1</sup> nor by what date the whole, as we now have it, was made up and accepted by the Church at large.

But another question. The Canon is the authorised and acknowledged *Summa* of the Sacred Books of the Christian Revelation, of books composed under Divine Inspiration and therefore wholly free from error, also therefore containing what God has willed to reveal to us for our instruction and guidance, concerning, it

<sup>1</sup> It appears that in some early collections other writings were included than those of the New Testament, as, *e.g.*, the First Epistle of St Clement of Rome ; or some of the New Testament writings were missing.

may be, in some part supernatural facts and doctrines of which we could have no instruction under other conditions. What, then, determines for the acceptance of the Church that a writing is an inspired writing, and how does it come about that just these writings of Apostles and Evangelists are their inspired writings, these and none others? Or is it to be thought that there were other writings besides which Apostles and others composed under inspiration, though not included in the collection that makes the New Testament?

The beginning may be doubtfully conjectured in the recognition of the Four Gospels as authentic biographies of Christ, or, **The Gospels.** if not to be called biographies, as authentic records of His public life and teaching; and critics are compelled, since the recent discovery of the Diatessaron of Tatian, to acknowledge a very early date as belonging to such recognition of the Four Gospels. If we are to judge at all by other attempted Gospels, of which portions have come down to us, it was not perhaps very difficult to draw a distinction between these and those. The Four had, moreover, been composed or adopted<sup>1</sup> by Apostles,

<sup>1</sup> The Gospel of St Mark is conceived to have been written for the use of St Peter in his missionary work, that of St Luke for the use of St Paul.

and possibly there was nothing else that had the same authority and distinction.

The rest of the New Testament is more difficult to explain, even if it is explicable at all.

**Epistles.** The Epistles of St Paul that appear are not, we know, his only Epistles,<sup>1</sup> nor is it antecedently likely that they should have been. Were the other Epistles plainly inferior, did they appear indisputably to be of a different character, or else why were they left out?

No one will question the excellence, as literary composition, as spiritual culture, as doctrinal exposition, of, *e.g.*, the Epistle to the Romans, or the First Epistle of St Peter, or the First of St John. But it does not appear that the higher excellence of these Epistles procured their inclusion. Because we have the Epistle of St Paul to Philemon, and the Second and Third Epistle of St John, all three, it may be said, addressed to individuals and of private concern. Why are these included? They are not the only private Epistles that either Apostle wrote. Consider St Paul's *instantia quotidiana* (2 Cor. xi. 28), consider his very intimate

<sup>1</sup> He expressly mentions an Epistle to the Laodiceans (Col. iv. 16); also a still earlier Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. v. 9), unless *ἔγραψα* is the Latin epistolary idiom—*scripsi*—and alludes to the Epistle in hand.

relations with Corinth (xii. 15, etc.) or with Ephesus, where he lived two of his apostolic years (Acts xix. 10-20).

The case of the private Epistles is the same as of those addressed to Churches. On what ground were these particular private Epistles of St Paul and St John selected to the exclusion of all others? Granted that there is a special beauty in St Paul's Epistle to Philemon. That circumstance will make it a favourite in any collection, but it will hardly determine this one to be inspired and all the rest not to be. Or again, it may be said that the Second Epistle of St John is doctrinally important for the sake of one sentence in it (verse 9). That will make it precious; but is a single sentence sufficient to determine the inspiration of the entire writing, and if not, what is the distinction of the rest above an ordinary letter such as St John would write? Neither as concerns Epistles to Churches, nor as concerns private Epistles, do we know the character of those excluded, but it is not appreciative of the intellectual powers and spiritual sanctity of the writers to imagine that any letter they wrote would be lacking in excellence, or fail to represent some importance in the occasion.

What may be called the natural account of the formation of the Canon, the historical



account, setting aside, as people wish in such accounts, any reference to inspiration being

The concerned, would be that certain "historical" Epistles or other writings of account. Apostles, or of their coadjutors, had a particular vogue and currency in the early age, and in consequence survived when others of their works did not. An Apostolic Epistle is regarded with reverence when received—so the account would run; it is preserved, and in after years when the writer is no longer living, it becomes one of the treasures of the particular Church (and of other Churches who may have been given copies), and it is put along with the Gospels as having a sacred association.

Sometimes no special interest or celebrity, but a kind of chance, we might be told, has determined the survival, as possibly in the case of the private Epistles; the Epistles have not been preserved in most instances, or have accidentally perished in private hands, but just a few have had better fortune. Presently an accredited catalogue of the Apostolic writings was known in the Church at large, and this was with time enlarged or purged so as to consist of the writings composing our present New Testament, those and no others. The New Testament writings were called Scripture

(2 Peter iii. 16), and, all Scripture being inspired (2 Tim. iii. 16), it was meant that they were inspired, equally as the historical and prophetical books of the Old Testament. If there had been any other writings that were certified as being Apostolic, and that survived, they would also have belonged to the New Testament and been held to be inspired writings. What makes inspired the writings that have survived, is, with this explanation, their surviving. Or, if not so, is there record of any Apostolic writing that existed at the time of the formation of the Canon and was excluded?<sup>1</sup>

The providence of Almighty God so disposes that the surviving works should be those that were written by inspiration, just those and no more. The Church determines the authenticity of the writings that compose the New Testament, and she also declares them to be inspired. There need be nothing to distinguish them as inspired apart from the declaration of the Church. That alone suffices.

Such is what purports to be the natural and historical account—intensely unsatisfactory to the believer in Inspiration as a divine reality. What! is a writing, however excellent and

<sup>1</sup> The so-called Acts of Peter and other modern unearthings are first, it may be judged, spurious, and secondly, they had been buried and unknown from an early age.

important, yet generically of the same nature as other writings, and then does it in the turn of a hand become inspired and impeccable, when and because the Church so names it? Or—more unwelcome yet—is its inspiration and impeccability gradually assured by the appreciation of readers through successive years and generations, so that the Church only declares what the general sense of Christendom has long determined? Not the responsible and authoritative decision, then, but the desultory, cumulative sentiment of different localities and of individual believers.

The only alternative account is that the writings themselves claimed to have been written under inspiration, originally from the first, by the assertion of the writers; that the writings were distinguished from others as being differently composed, already when the Epistles were delivered. It could not even then, not even according to that account, be said that no inspired writing had perished, but it could be said that those which have survived were carefully preserved as being inspired, beyond others that were not inspired, and they were included in the New Testament as having that character.

A previous question, then, in the debate, which must not be evaded, is whether the

sacred writers were conscious of writing under any different conditions from the ordinary. The

**Conscious Inspiration.** Gospel of St Mark or the Epistle of St James have an immeasurable value with the consideration that every word in each of them is absolutely true, that is to say, that they were written by Divine Inspiration; but with any doubt about this being so, with nothing said of inspiration or of inerrancy, they are neither of them writings to seem extraordinary. To have it recorded, for example, that in the course of his sight being miraculously restored, a blind man said he saw men like trees walking (Mark viii. 24), is merely a picturesque detail the writer adds at his discretion; but if the words were certainly said it is of extraordinary even scientific interest. So to be told that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James i. 17), is something like platitude. But if it is a divine affirmation making absolute the human sentence, it becomes a doctrinal assertion of the widest marvel.

Without inspiration assured, the Gospel of St Mark is a simple biographical narrative, with every appearance of sincerity, and admirable so far, but asking for no peculiar veneration; the Epistle of St James is an unaffected and plainly-worded exhortation to the practice of



Christian virtue, which would be disapproved in several of its passages by pretending Churchmen of wealth and position, and on that account, in some age or region of Christendom when worldliness held sway, would be refused an *imprimatur*.

Were St Mark and St James, then, aware at the time of their writing, whatever might be the manner of their intuition, that they were writing by Divine Inspiration? Or did St Mark write his account of Christ and St James his ethical exposition as ordinary uninspired authors would set to work, and was it only after completion and publication, after the lapse of years, that either work was decided—on evidence and for reasons unknown to us and beyond our conjecture—to be an inspired writing? It does not suffice that the writings were done by an Apostle or by the “son” of one (1 Peter v. 13). The Apostles have had the Paraclete bestowed upon them to endow them for their office; they have always the divine protection and aid. But that is not the same thing as being inspired in the sense in which the word is applied to speech or writing.

However, there is evidence that the Epistles of St Paul were accounted Scripture (and surely, then, the writing of other Apostles also) and paralleled with the Old Testament writings

during his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> St Peter uses a remarkable expression, "as our beloved brother Paul,

**Apostolic** *according to the wisdom given him,*  
**Epistles** hath written to you"—especially re-  
**accounted** markable in the context. Does it  
**Scripture.** refer to St Paul's Apostolic office,

or is it not something more, declaring that in his writing ideas and words were not his own but "given him"? At any rate, if St Paul did so write, that would be the meaning.

A remarkable sentence of St Paul's is that of 1 Cor. xiv. 37—"If any man seem to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord"—remarkable because occurring at the end of a somewhat lengthy and detailed instruction regarding "spiritual gifts," and the appeal of the sentence is to such as are possessed or claim to be possessed of miraculous powers. Thus St Paul's writing his Epistle is put by him in the same class along with working miracles,

<sup>1</sup> The context is that in his (St Paul's) Epistles "are things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned wrest, as also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." In the classical Greek usage, to speak of "the other Scriptures" would not name St Paul's Epistles as being such. But the Greek of the New Testament is not classical Greek but is Latinised. There is no such idiom in Latin, and even if St Paul's Epistles are not named Scripture, they are still paralleled with the Old Testament Scriptures in the passage.

speaking with tongues, or prophesying (xii. 10). It would be extravagant, if St Paul was conscious of nothing different in his writing from ordinary writing.

Meanwhile, in such connection the sentence does not mean only that the things written were according to the teaching of Christ. Similarly, when St Paul justifies his giving precedence to virginity, writing, "I think that I have the spirit of God" (vii. 40), it is natural to refer the sentence to his present writing, and not to his Apostolic office apart; or when he writes (Rom. xii. 3), "I say to you by the grace of God that is given me."

Another circumstance showing that the writers would be conscious of a difference from ordinary writing, that they could not help being so conscious, is not obscurely betrayed. The First Epistle of St John is fairly in the Johannine style, in the style of his Gospel, and there are many identities of phrase with the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> But it is not the Johannine reasoning as compared, *e.g.*, with the introduction to the

<sup>1</sup> The sceptical account that the Gospel and Epistle are by different hands, one being imitation of the style and language of the other, would suppose a very clever and laborious imitator, without compeer in that age. Regarding the maintenance of the writer's natural style under inspiration, see below, p. 166.

Gospel (John i. 1-18) or with what is perhaps commentary of the Evangelist after the visit of Nicodemus to Christ (iii. 13-21). The thought of the beloved disciple, if in lofty regions, is definite and decisive. But of the Epistle it has been said that the mind of the writer "was penetrated by one or two preponderating conceptions, glorious and supereminent above what the heart of man can picture to itself unaided, and he rang the changes of words upon words, so that he might leave nothing unexpressed of the glory and transcendence that rapt his spirit in beatific vision; yes, ere the river of death was crossed. What may be thought verbiage, is expression of multiplicity, of that which belongs to the infinite, self-involution and again evolution into its movement and expansion." The suggestion is very consonant with the notion of writing by inspiration, when the writer is not entirely at home with the ideas he is expressing, which are not native to his mind.

Such difficulty of expression, prolixity of expression, is not confined to the Epistle of St John. Let anyone compare, *e.g.*, the third chapter of 2 Corinthians (where St Paul finds it difficult to finish with his topic and proceed) with the lucid, though close, reasoning of Romans vi.



But objection may here be raised. Doubtless, it may be said, the writings of St John or of St Paul, touching on high theological themes, allow the notion of divine aid in the production. But is it the same with the Gospel of St Mark or the Epistle of St James? Half the New Testament is plain narrative. The writing of Gospels and Acts is not a matter of reflection and of having ideas, but of collecting evidence and arranging notes. Inspiration makes the narrative exempt from error, but has no other opportunity afforded it. It is a vicious circle; the Gospels are to be the truth because the writing is inspired, and the only occasion for the writing being inspired is the truth of the narrative. The writers make no claim, as neither do the writers of Epistles, no clearly expressed claim, to have essayed their task under other than ordinary conditions. The introduction St Luke makes to his Gospel (Luke i. 1-4) asserts the truth and accuracy of his narrative and the pains he has bestowed upon it, and that is all.

Supposing, however, the Gospels to be written consciously as by Divine Inspiration, that will mean that they are another kind of record altogether than anything on their subject besides. St Luke alleges that "many have taken in hand

to set forth in order a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us," and he has written his Gospel that the real facts might be known. Other narratives were on the basis of ordinary composition. The Four Gospels were each of them of a different character from those other narratives, and, as being such, were *from their first publication* recognised by the Church as the authentic accounts permitted by God of the public life and teaching of the incarnate Word, that they might serve for the instruction and happiness of succeeding ages. They were not books for the library, but books for the Church, sacred books; there were no others of similar profession, and no difficulty or question ever arose as regards the four belonging to the Canon, being in fact its foundation floor. The Acts of the Apostles similarly, a second and continuing work of the inspired writer of the Gospel, dealing with matters of very serious moment in respect of selection and of their telling, in which the best human judgment might well need some better aid. Any other Acts of which we have intimation were left, like profane literature, to chance preservation, not because they were inferior to the work of St Luke in execution, though that they un-

doubtedly were, but because they were another kind of writing.

Epistles to particular Churches, or Catholic Epistles, their writers might sit down to write,

**And of** on special occasion and according  
**inspired** to divine monition, assisted or  
**Epistles.** wholly governed by Divine Inspiration, not in their own words, and the ideas they expressed not being their own. At other times, as possibly, *e.g.* (though not probably), in the case of the Epistle to the Laodiceans, what they wrote would be of another character, from beginning to end all their own, or with no more of divine aid than men, and particularly such men, might obtain in all their actions of importance. Of the utmost interest to ourselves, any such writing, the work of an Apostle, with light, no doubt, shed on that ecclesiastical time and usage, if it had survived. But it was never the same thing, it was not preserved; the Epistle had not the character of the Four Gospels and could not be put along with them. Thus, supposing the Epistles of St Paul that belong to the New Testament to be his surviving Epistles, yet it is not fortuitous that they survive; they are those of his Epistles that were written by Divine Inspiration.

It is no doubt exceptional that St Paul should be directed to write under inspiration a private

letter to Philemon, but the reason may be found in the future eminence of that Onesimus about whom the letter is written (cp. Col. iv. 9). The Third Epistle of St John, though superscribed to Gaius,<sup>1</sup> is addressed "to the Church" (ver. 9). It is uncertain whether the Second Epistle is of private or public address, whether to "the Lady Electa" or to "the elect Lady," which latter might be only personification of a particular church (cp. 1 Peter i. 1), but in either case it is plainly in the style and manner of a public Epistle. The Epistles of St Paul to St Timothy and to St Titus must be so regarded, becoming in their ultimate utility perfectly general instruction regarding the office of bishop or of priest, while what there is besides might have found place also in a public Epistle.

Such, then, would be the account of the composition of the Canon, supposing the inspired writers, when they wrote, to be conscious of writing by Divine Inspiration. In that immediate post-Pentecostal period, with men

<sup>1</sup> The name is a common one and identification is not to be argued. But the Gaius of Romans xvi. 23, who is "the host of the whole Church," would seem not unlikely to be the same as the fellow-townsmen of St Timothy (Acts xx. 4; cp. xiv. 6), or as the Macedonian Gaius who is named along with Aristarchus as St Paul's "fellow-expatriate" (συνέκδημος, xix. 29). One of these might be conjectured.



who exhibited a constant supernatural activity, the notion would not occur of any reticence being observed regarding the mode of production of the writings. The writings would not be declared inspired by the later judgment of the Church, as in some process of canonisation ; they would have that character belonging to them by tradition from their first origin. The authority of the Church would intervene, not newly to declare the writings inspired, but to confirm and make *de fide* the ancient tradition—as is in fact the ordinary manner of the Church's action.

A word should be added about the Apocalypse. This is a different thing from either

Gospels or Epistles, inasmuch as  
 The they have no such express sugges-  
 Apocalypse. tion about them of supernatural  
 revelation, and have their counterparts in profane literature, while the Apocalypse can be paralleled with some portions of the ancient Hebrew prophecies, but has nothing else in any language like it ; it is not biographical nor epistolary, nor according to any ordinary literary form. It treats wholly of supra-sensible things ; it states categorically that the matters contained in it are supernaturally revealed.

But the difference does not extend to the writing. As to that, the Apocalypse raises

the same question as Epistle or Gospel. The vision is divine and true, but is it infallibly described? "I am the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25)—divine words of gladness, but has the Evangelist unerringly recorded them? Similarly, "I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell" (Apoc. i. 18)—no less divine and glad, if St John has recollected accurately. In the production of the Apocalypse there are two things: first, the vision, and then, the writing of it—"Write the things that thou hast seen" (ver. 19). Is the writing done on the basis of ordinary writing, the writer straining his recollection to recall what he had seen and heard? Or is it on an extraordinary and different basis, additional to the vision, subsequent to it, but equally independent of the writer's natural faculties? The Apocalypse is not any more an inspired book and forming a portion of the Canon of Scripture because it deals with the supra-sensible world. But because in the writing of it St John wrote by Divine Inspiration.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAGNIFICAT

THE nature of Inspiration, in what way it operates, the relation of the inspired writer to the divine direction and control afforded him, may be decisively ascertained by the consideration of the Magnificat alone, without need of learned and laborious study of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, without having to consider in its entirety even one of the books. Or at any rate the consideration of the Magnificat brings our doctrine to proof, whoever we are and whatever our religious convictions, determines with utmost certainty the watershed this side and that, what any individual belief means and what the Church means, and whether the meanings flow similarly, as it behoves them to do, or are contrary, which heaven forbid.

As the Blessed Virgin is Mother of God, and accordingly before the presence of God highest in sovereignty, not only above all

human creatures, but above the angelic host as well, everything connected with her person claims the greatest veneration and **Super-eminence of the Magnificat.** must partake of the devotion that is felt towards herself. To repeat in our unworthiness and meanness the words her lips first formed, to have our bosoms feel in feeble measure the joy and exultation with which her bosom swelled, to be grateful to God and to be humble after her model and in her very speech—this is to come into actual contact with heavenly mysteries, it is a favour to be reaped with worship and with awe.

In the commemoration of the Church the Magnificat is hardly associated less closely with the Madonna than is the Angelus; it is as ordinary in devotion as the Litany of Loretto, and of more ancient usage; it is recited always in the Office of Vespers except only during Holy Week; a special reverence is shown by the congregation all standing during the recitation.

Put the claim and position of the Magnificat in simple words, and it is high and precious because associated with the Immaculate Virgin, and it is still higher and more precious as her utterance. "*Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis*" (Ps. xlv. [xlv.] 2). Not only is the Mother of



God full of grace, but her lips also are gracious, the lips from which the words first issued, "*Ecce ancilla Domini—Respexit humilitatem ancillae Suae—Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*"

The Magnificat derives additional majesty from the occasion on which it was spoken.

**Occasion** The angel Gabriel appeared to the  
**of the** youthful virgin, newly espoused to  
**Magnificat.** her cousin St Joseph, and announced to her that she was to bring forth the Holy One. She protests her vowed virginity (*virum non cognosco*), but she has not understood; it is to be more honourable and terrible, the Holy Ghost shall overshadow her. The immaculate heart of Mary therewith accepts the appointment of God—*fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*—diffidence and docility the while contending within her gentle bosom. Chosen to be the Mother of God before all women since the creation of Eve, and the divine Will becoming operative through her submission, she must have every favour granted her, and the pregnancy of her cousin, Elizabeth, in advanced years, is told her for a sign *quia non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum*.

Afterwards, accordingly, Mary took her journey to visit St Elizabeth. And the divine favour allowed her more than the bare fulfilment of the sign. When she entered, her cousin greeted her

at once with the repetition of the angel Gabriel's words, *benedicta tu in mulieribus*, and with the title *Mater Domini*; her cousin declared her own unworthiness of entertaining the Mother of God. The salutation of Mary had given to the unborn babe its first life. "Blessed," said St Elizabeth, "is she who believed, because the things spoken to her from the Lord shall have fulfilment."

It was all true, then; it was going to be. In spite of her insignificance. It was too wonderful that God should have chosen her. The glad heart sings, the overflowings of the heart are melodies. Mary praises God and pours forth her thanksgiving in audible voice, to be re-echoed down the ages. The Magnificat is the hymn of praise of the Mother of God for her maternity. No hymn conceivably before or since so radiant in glory.

The story of the Magnificat is told in St Luke's Gospel, no allusion to it anywhere else in the New Testament. The tradition **Source of** **St Luke's** **account.** is that St Luke was at one time in intimate association with the Mother of Jesus, possibly taking the place, through some occasion, of St John as having charge of her. For such office no doubt he had special qualifications. St Paul writes of him with affection (Col. iv. 14) and signalises his constancy (2 Tim. iv. 11). If he is "the brother whose praise

is in the Gospel" of 2 Cor. viii. 18, 19, there is further commendation of him. The humility of the Evangelist, which would endear him to the "most humble virgin," is evidenced by his complete effacement of himself in writing the Acts of the Apostles, no allusion to his connection with St Paul's work appearing (contr. Acts xv. 40, of Silas; xvi. 1-3 of St Timothy) beyond the use of the first person when his association begins (xvi. 9).

As a physician and (tradition says) a painter besides, St Luke was a man of culture and intelligence, and qualified beyond others to write a Gospel by his natural gifts. The character of his mind and disposition is revealed in his work, widely compassionate and tender-hearted, searching out the latent good in Gentile, in publican, in sinner, finding and expressing with a painter's art the beauty of parable or of scene. The infancy of Jesus had a special attraction for him. Its several events have been subjects for the painter in every age, but not more because the Infancy offered the artist opportunity than because St Luke had found and expressed the opportunity in it.

Or the Infancy was prominent in his narrative because he had been with the Virgin Mother. He was specially favoured, and prevailed on her to tell him about the wonderful time of the

Infancy of Jesus, things she had never been willing to speak of before, things she kept in her heart (Luke ii. 19). It would be revealed to her that he was the future Evangelist, or even he might have already formed the project in his mind and told her of his ambition.

St Matthew had begun his Gospel with the preaching of the Baptist; so had St Mark. St Matthew had a brief preliminary concerning the Birth, so as to give testimony to the perpetual virginity of Mary (i. 18-25), and he told of the visit of the Magi and the Massacre of the Innocents that followed (chap. ii.). It is not easy to discover the particular relevance of these latter events or the reason for their inclusion in the narrative without anything more recorded of that time, unless it was that the Evangelist knew no more. St Luke, first of Evangelists, relates the story of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth, the Presentation in the Temple, the Finding in the Temple—in fact the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Every one of these events is recorded with detail and with rareness of touch, making each a picture. The details could be got from Mary. As St Luke is the only Evangelist to record them, and as he was associated with Mary, it is probable they were. Did he get the Magnificat from her?



Given the circumstances of the visit to St Elizabeth, and given the piety and simplicity of the heart of Mary, something like the Magnificat may evidently be deduced; if the narrator inserts it in his story, it will almost certainly be what really occurred. Mary must give glory to God and abase herself before the favour of the Almighty. She need not have mentioned her Magnificat among the things she told St Luke, but it is quite possible that she should have done so.

When, however, the *words* of the Magnificat are in question, it is a different matter. The

**Authen-** event was some forty years old, and  
**ticity of the** all witnesses, if there had been any  
**Magnificat.** besides St Elizabeth, had passed away. Mary was the only person to be applied to, or having information to give. It is impossible that she should have kept in her mind all those years the words she had spoken, and if the impossible had happened, it could be no more than a vague and general recollection.

But in fact she did not keep them in her mind. There is no self-consciousness in Mary. "Did you not know that in what is My Father's, in that I must be?" was a saying she kept in her heart (Luke ii. 51), because it was a saying of her Son's. But words of her own she would not. She might remember something of the

Nunc Dimittis (vv. 29-32), because it was about Him, but not if it had been about her.

Nor is it imaginable that St Elizabeth or some one present, if there was anyone besides, should have made a record of the visitation and included the hymn of Mary immediately at the time, and the record have been kept all those forty years till St Luke found his use for it. That Mary made a record is more unimaginable still.

This being so, though the Magnificat properly belongs to the story, the words of it must be St Luke's invention. It is thought that he took as his model the hymn of Hannah, when she had taken the infant Samuel, the child of her prayers, and offered him to God in the Temple (1 Kings [Sam.] ii. 1-10). The Magnificat is a free copy, abbreviated and simpler, with variations to suit the case of Mary — "*Respexit humilitatem ancillae Suae—Fecit mihi magna—Suscepit Israel puerum suum.*"

However this may be, the language and ideas, however obtained, are St Luke's composition. Of any Magnificat Mary spoke there is nothing. It is not an imperfect record, so far as memory might serve. There is no memory and there is no recording. No single one of the words were spoken by Mary ; they are St Luke's words, every one of them.

It now, therefore, appears, if such were a true rationale, that the honour and devotion offered to the Magnificat within the Church by Christian piety, as described before in the chapter, are due to a mistake which a very little reflection should have rectified. Because it really could not be supposed that forty years after the event anything of Mary's thanksgiving was recoverable, hardly even forty days or hours or minutes after, when it was such outpouring, unpremeditated, unweighed, as the angels sang at the Nativity, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, the Queen of Angels then first setting them the theme.

When St Luke in his Gospel has: "And Mary said, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*," it would not be properly true; Mary did not say it. What St Luke writes becomes not a record but a literary imagination, what she might, would, or should have said. The story of the Visitation may be the story of a veritable incident, probably would be, if St Luke could hear from Mary of the events of that unforgotten time. But the details, or at any rate this detail, the narrator has supplied out of his imagination, as he deemed suitable. The Magnificat is no more than that. Belonging to the Gospel narrative and associated with it, but not directly associated with Mary. We should sing, standing on our feet in reverent awe, what St Luke

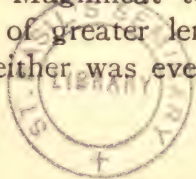
artistically made up for us, the Magnificat of St Luke, not of Mary. Mary has no Magnificat. There must be in the argument somewhere a flaw.

With such conclusion, however, which really appears inevitable as it stands, there are further

**Reliability** consequences. An ancient plea for **of St Luke's** the Gospels, possibly justly urged, **Gospel.**

possibly not altogether, was that they are plain narratives written by simple men, who are content to chronicle events without embellishment, who out of reverence for their task are rigidly scrupulous, who have not the literary training or capacity, even if they had the will, to post-impressionise the scenes and incidents. St Luke, in particular, begins his Gospel with a profession of fidelity. He writes, he says, of things surely believed, attested by eye-witnesses and Apostles; he writes with full information; he writes that the true facts may be known.

But now it seems that this account of his design must not be taken too literally. In his narrative of the Birth and Infancy, we ask, how much is to be thought founded on information, and how much an eking out of the story, as we find the Magnificat to be? There is the Benedictus, of greater length, and the Nunc Dimittis, if either was ever uttered, equally un-





recoverable for aught that appears. When on Christmas morning the shepherds came to the manger-throne, which of them, we ask, told the exact words of the angelic song they had heard, *Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis*, these few words, and the song then ending? The angelic host had been seen, and the angelic host had sung together in the shepherds' hearing. It is merely St Luke's style to give the very words, as when he made up for our Lady her Magnificat. What is the substratum of fact, how much is literary setting, in the narrative of the Birth and Infancy, which only St Luke supplies?

Is the account of the later years more reliable? St Matthew and St Mark give identically the dying words of Jesus on the Cross—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34). St Luke has nothing of this, but substitutes two different sayings, one at the beginning of the Three Hours' Agony—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (xxiii. 34); the other at the end—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (ver. 46). The first may seem suspiciously after the compassionate and charitable disposition of the Evangelist, the second is the appropriate prayer of the "just man" that the centurion confessed

Jesus to be (ver. 47).<sup>1</sup> If St Luke finds words for the song of angels at the Nativity, he may do the same for the death of Jesus on the Cross.

This dissolvent analysis is obviously applicable to all the Four Gospels, and the Magnificat of St Luke is not a solitary make-believe, but a sample of many. There are many instances,

**Literary  
character  
of the  
Gospels.**

easily discoverable, in which the circumstances and occurrences related can be only approximately known to the writers; there are some in which they cannot be known at all. One obvious dubiety runs throughout. Are the sayings of our Lord His actual sayings, or are they imperfectly recalled; are any put into His mouth?

The parables would be remembered, those, at least, that more nearly touched the conscience of His hearers, but we can hardly suppose that they are reproduced verbally as He spoke them. The Sermon on the Mount is presented in St Matthew's Gospel as a long unbroken discourse, making more than a hundred verses. St Luke makes of it two discourses spoken on different

<sup>1</sup> Peculiar to St Luke is the distinction between the two thieves who were crucified with our Lord, one of whom confesses Christ and is promised immediate Paradise. Omission in the other Synoptics need not be denial, but again the discovery of good in the outcast and the sinner is what St Luke loves.

occasions (vi. 20-49 ; xii.). The matter of the one discourse and of the two is not throughout identical. The discourse is made up by either Evangelist out of what he could learn of the recollection of those present. Then such sequence and connection as exists among the various portions and paragraphs is the Evangelist's own arrangement, or anywhere may be. It is obviously impossible that anyone should have the discourse by heart from beginning to end as delivered.

Thus the beautiful "Consider the lilies," etc., may follow (Matt. vi. 20, 28) or precede (Luke xii. 27, 33) the injunction to lay up treasure in heaven ; as spoken one order only must be supposed. Even the word and the phrase can only imperfectly be those of our Lord. For example, when the acceptance of His doctrine is compared to building a house upon a rock and not upon the sand, the actual words in the two Gospels vary. Or again : did our Lord say, "Blessed the poor," or "Blessed are the poor in spirit" ? Is the second Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," or, "Blessed you who weep now, for you shall laugh" ? Evidently the difference is one of style between the narrators, so that the words are theirs, not those of Christ, and what His words were we do not know.

The occasion, and therefore connection, of sayings is variously given. The saying about blasphemy against the Holy Ghost in the two first Gospels follows upon the Pharisees having said that our Lord cast out devils by Beelzebub (Matt. xii. 24; Mark iii. 22). But St Luke (xii. 10) puts it into a separate and later discourse. As we do not know on which occasion it was spoken, neither do we know whether it was spoken on either.

In the Gospel of St John, who gives a full and widely branching report of our Lord's discourses, there is not seldom a complete absence of connection (viii. 12; x. 1; xii. 44; xv. 1). Relying on the Gospel account as true, we may be sure that our Lord spoke of His disciples as sheep and of Himself as the shepherd (cp. Matt. xxvi. 31). But that he said: "I am the good Shepherd, and I know mine and mine know Me"—we cannot be sure of those very words.

The beautiful sayings in St John's Gospel are beautiful also in phrase, and the phrase is that of the Evangelist, or may be. Even it happens that the Evangelist in introducing the sayings adds something of his own. "Thomas saith to Jesus," we read, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how should we know the way? Jesus saith unto him"—most likely—"I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father



but by Me" (John xiv. 5, 6). St John reports, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," the addition being of favourite words of his (cp. 1 John ii. 21; iii. 14, etc.).

Or at another time the saying may be every word purely literary, to help out the narrative; as, for example, the last three verses of John ix. are quite unconnected with the immediate context, in which Jesus and the restored blind man seem to be alone together. But they draw, as it were, the moral, and convey the spiritual lesson—"Are we blind also," like the man of whom we read? The words our Lord is made to speak are not recollected as having been uttered by Him, but they might suitably have been uttered.

Besides such uncertainties, there are other things more precisely parallel with the Magnificat of St Luke. Two examples

<p><b>The Temptation and the Agony in the Garden.</b></p>	<p>may be cited, where the matter is very plain and evident, and no human authority or source of information could possibly have been found for what the narrative records.</p>
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It cannot be imagined that our Lord gave to anyone an account of His temptation<sup>1</sup> (which is recorded by all three Synoptics), or indeed

<sup>1</sup> Similarly of His dialogue with the woman of Samaria (John iv.).

told anyone of His having been tempted. Without verbal inspiration, the dialogue is pure invention, and even, it may be thought, the occurrence. But if the Evangelist invents the Temptation, why not the Transfiguration, or the Walking of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee?

In the agony of our Lord in the Garden it is recorded that "His sweat became drops of blood" (Luke xxii. 44), and the words of the prayer He said are given, three times over the same words. But He was "a stone's cast" (ver. 41) away from the three disciples, and each time He returned to them He found them asleep, so that they could not have distinguished the drops of blood, and they did not hear anything. On the other hand, it appears perfectly inconceivable that the Evangelist should think of making up a prayer for Jesus at that supreme time, that the Evangelist should dare. But if the words are made up, why not also the words of the Way of the Cross, which only St Luke (xxiii. 28-31) records? Or the repentance of Judas, which is only found in St Matthew's story (xxvii. 3-10)?

The Gospels, then, are true accounts, but in the historical manner of narration; they give us the teaching of Jesus, though not in His words; they select the salient incidents of His ministry, and give them occasion and con-

nection the best they can make ; if there is anything untrue in fact, it has still its verisimilitude.

**The Gospels** Yes, certainly, the Gospels are true only inspired narratives ; they are **pro-** as **history.** tected against error, against including unveracious incidents or presenting a false portraiture. Still the narrative, the history, cannot be other than it is—the record of past events collected and recollected and put together according to the writer's judgment and ability ; the sayings of Jesus sometimes word for word, more often the writer's wording, occasionally even the writer's inventing.

The Magnificat in St Luke's Gospel is every word of it the Evangelist's, and so probably the Prayer of Jesus in St John's Gospel (chap. xvii.). The Sermon on the Mount, that glittering enunciation of a higher morality, which some now would have to be the whole of Christianity, contains beyond doubt the doctrine of Jesus, and the several precepts are almost verbally His. But as a discourse delivered in the hill country<sup>1</sup> on one particular occasion, it is only St Matthew's arrangement.

Such are imagined to be some of the aspects of the Gospel narratives, when viewed as narratives of past events, recollections of a bygone

<sup>1</sup> Characteristically discrepant, St Luke (vi. 17) makes it to be delivered in the plain.

time. Disturbing, no doubt, such representation, to the unlearned. We had regarded the Gospels as sacred books, and had read them with religious reverence, not questioning, taking everything as it came for literally true. The words put into the mouth of our Lord we believed to be His words, and to have been spoken as and when the Gospels recorded. Our unreflecting faith is made out to be erroneous; still, faith it was. What is left for us by the critical school hardly seems like faith.

It must be remembered, besides, that the Church does not seem to acquiesce. Whatever

**The** the precise evaluation of the idea  
**Church's** of Divine Inspiration for Christian  
**dissent.** understanding, it means more than freedom from error, more than literary supereminence. It does not say the Gospels are inspired because they are written with simple eloquence or because they present us with a very wonderful narrative. But how is the Church to evade the reasoning? Or, rather, how has the Church evaded?

The Magnificat is the hymn of our Lady, and so venerated. No one, however, not even herself, could give St Luke the words of it. In his work St Luke is divinely inspired, and he records that Mary said it. But the hymn is even then his wording; we do not venerate



words that proceeded from between the lips of the Mother of God, but only words that the Holy Gospel has supposed her to say. Truly—"The law allows it and the court awards it."

*Unless writing by Divine Inspiration should be other than is supposed, a different thing altogether.* The mind of the in-

**Reconcilia-  
tion.**

spired writer is not influenced, his faculties are not enlarged, ideas beyond his own are not given him, nothing of that kind is done. What happens is that the words he writes are not his own words, the words are words given him, as the ordinary manner of writing by Divine Inspiration. Then there need be no question of recollecting or of obtaining information. Neither St Luke nor Mary is responsible for the words (though Mary might perhaps dimly recollect some likeness, if they were submitted to her); St Luke did not make them up, nor did he get them from Mary; they were what he had given him to write as being inspired in the writing. Their acceptance or not as authentic, depends upon the acceptance of the Gospel as an inspired writing, written "according to the Lord" (2 Cor. xi. 17). "Have I now any power at all"—so protested Balaam to the King of Moab—"to say anything? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. xxii. 38).

That is Inspiration, whether the words are given for utterance or for writing, whether it is Prophet or Evangelist who under such condition has parted with his own power to say or to write.

Accept such account of Inspiration, and as the Magnificat may then remain our Lady's utterance, so may remain, *e.g.*, the words of our Lord in His temptation—not otherwise, there having been no auditor. So may remain, literally and indefectibly, the beautiful sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, or in the farewell discourse of Maundy Thursday (John xiv, xv, xvi.). Accept any other account, and all these things are uncertain and dubious, as the preceding argument has shown, and as some of those who give such other account are themselves aware. On the one hand there is a happy serenity with the aid of faith. On the other a heavy price is paid for what is imagined to be a more rational account, and one more consonant with the general aspect of the New Testament, as it first appears and without reasoning upon it. Meanwhile the faith that gives back happiness would be a reasonable faith; because the account that vindicates the Magnificat is the account the Church is obliged to accept, and the Church refuses any other.

## CHAPTER III

### KINDS AND DEGREES OF INSPIRATION : PROPHETICAL

WITH the conclusion of the preceding chapter it would seem that there can be no varieties of inspiration, whether as regards a more or less complete influence over the mind of the inspired writer, or as regards what he writes being conveyed to him supernaturally in less or greater measure. All is given to him, and whether it is a mere chronological reference—"there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled," or a theological doctrine—"the Word was with God, and the Word was God," it has no different relation to the writer; either is equally not his own, but belonging to a verbally communicated instruction; either is equally written by inspiration and not by natural intelligence.

But this doctrine of Inspiration, supposing it to be the doctrine of the Church—and that has yet to be discovered—is at any rate the

least favoured of all accounts by critics and expositors outside. Even within the Church, except, it may be, for ultimate definition, for the language of Popes, Verbal Inspiration is not perhaps a doctrine greatly favoured. Although without it the Temptation of Christ is necessarily unhistorical, and the Magnificat no more authentic than the Book of Enoch. What ordinary folk have in their minds, when confessing the books of Holy Scripture to be written by Divine Inspiration, is nothing different from ordinary writing, only some additional faculty being bestowed upon the mind of the writer, so that he writes of things that he could not unaided, and so that his writing is exempt from error. There is not imagined a particular condition under which the writing is done, the writer being fully conscious of writing under such condition, and being unable to mistake about it. But with verbal inspiration, when the words themselves are not the writer's words, this must be so.

Nevertheless it does not seem irrelevant to review other theories of Inspiration, as bringing more within the range of our intelligent use of what Verbal Inspiration error. would be when we have distinguished it from those other doctrines. Both



the Greek Aristotle and the English Bacon in philosophy recommend us to proceed by the elimination of error. Ἀπορία εὐπορία, "disputing is solving," is a proverb invented or adopted by the former; the latter would have the true scientific method to be *per omnimodam rejectionem*, "by absolute elimination." With determining what a doctrine is not, we come near defining what it is.

The late ingenious Professor Clifford once attempted to tell us about a space of four dimensions, a condition inconceivable by the human mind. Not even Professor Clifford could give us any positive description of it. But he so carefully and laboriously explained the relations applying to our world which would not apply with the additional dimension, that at the end a shadowy phantom of the strange thing hovered about the mind of the reader. Similarly with the condition of writing by Divine Inspiration, we do not know it, we find difficulty in forming any conception of it, no inspired writer has left us any account of it.<sup>1</sup> But by discarding successive conclusions that

<sup>1</sup> Unless the later saints in their revelations are to be considered inspired writers, and the difference between them and the New Testament writers only that the latter had a higher mission. St Teresa makes the most strenuous efforts to describe her experience. The manner appears to be that of abnormal writing.

are found inapplicable, we narrow the question down to something that, although hardly to be understood, has still a distinguishable shape and character.

Also the discoveries of external writers may prove serviceable in themselves. The final deductions are wrong, but not perhaps the argument throughout. The opinions expressed are those of learned men, and they are widely prevalent. Under either aspect they are unlikely to be wholly erroneous.

The first and most insistent species of inspired utterance is that of prophecy, when the prophet gives warning of what is future and unknown, and when his saying is proved true by the event. His cognisance, then, is of a supernatural order. Moreover the prophet asserts himself to receive divine inspiration. "Which way," said prophet Zedekiah to prophet Micaiah, "went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee" (3 [1] Kings xxii. 24)? Jeremiah thus opens: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Write thee all the words I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jer. xxx. 1, 2).

The sentence the prophet utters, the matters of which he treats, are related to the unknown world, beyond the range of sensible perception, mysteries scarcely possible to express in terms

of our sensible experience. The vision of Ezekiel (i) has its counterpart in that of Daniel (vii), and something similar to **Supra-** either appears again after six hun-  
**mundane** dred years in the Apocalypse (iv,  
**ideas and** xiii, xvii), imaged in the appearance  
**style.** of strange living creatures, or of beasts with horns that have a separate vitality. The visible coming of the Deity is proclaimed: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" (Is. lxiii. 1). "God came from the south and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of His praise" (Hab. iii. 3). It is to be observed that not the prophet but God Himself speaks. The unseen world, the goings to and fro upon the earth of the Most High, are declared to the prophet.

The Hebrew prophecies are written in poetry, but besides that they have a common style. So that the Apocalypse, which is not written in Hebrew and is not poetry, has the same style. It is not the style of ordinary writing, nor yet of poetry as such. The poetry of the Old Testament is all of religious import, concerning the relation of God to His people, or of didactic import, concerning the divine law and its observ-

ance: poetry of prophecy or poetry of didactic philosophy. But the didactic is in another style:—

“Cast thy bread upon the waters ;  
 Thou shalt find it after many days.  
 In the morning sow thy seed,  
 And in the evening withhold not thy hand ;  
 For thou knowest not which shall prosper,  
 Whether this or that,  
 Or whether both shall be good.  
 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ;  
 And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth,  
 And walk thou in the ways of thy heart,  
 And in the sight of thine eyes ;  
 But know that for all these things  
 God will bring thee into judgment.”

Eccl. xi.

This is more the style of Hesiod than of Isaiah.

The different personalities of the writers are not submerged, but appear in the prophecies. Amos is not like Isaiah nor Hosea like Daniel. Where, then, is the common style? It is not according to the saying that, “the style is the man.” Does the common prophetic style represent a common superinduced condition under which the prophecies are vouchsafed? “The word of the Lord comes” to the prophet; or, in the phrase of Isaiah (ii. 1), the prophet “sees the word.” Thereupon the word of the Lord has a manner of speech which is recognisable in the prophecies along with the personal difference and without destroying it.



In prophecy, when the prophet is to declare that of which he has no knowledge, the divine

**Necessity of verbal inspiration in prophecy.** inspiration must be of a definite and positive character. Sometimes it is plain that words as well as ideas must be given. How else are the details to fall true? "They part my

garments among them and cast lots for my vesture." The prophet might have the idea of the suffering Messiah, but the division of the garments and casting of lots is too much off the track, unless the sentence itself is given. The restoration of the Temple might be given to Isaiah in idea; but, before Cyrus is born, the name of Cyrus (Is. xlv. 28), who is to do it, can be given only in the actual word.<sup>1</sup> Thus verbal inspiration, if anywhere, may be exhibited in prophecy; at any rate there is in prophecy more of suggestion and control to be supposed, if events are foretold beyond human prevision.

It makes no difference to the style or to the inspiration whether the prophet speaks his message in the ears of a multitude or makes of it a written roll. The blessing of the twelve Jewish patriarchs by their father, Jacob (Gen.

<sup>1</sup> The critics will not have the name of Cyrus in the text, but there seems little reason for expunging it except that it could not be there with the ordinary manner of writing. The critics gain little, because there are numerous other examples of equally inexplicable prophetic detail.

xlix. 1-26), the prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiii. 18-24; xxiv. 4-24), the song of Moses (Deut.

**No difference between speech and writing.** xxxii. 1-43), all spoken inspirations, may be compared with portions of the Psalms or of the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah which are written.

The picture of the prophet who stands on the top of Peor, and, rapt in mystic ecstasy, speaks the words God puts into his mouth, that picture, if anywhere true, must apply as well to prophecy that is written.

One of the prophecies of Jeremiah was not written, as was possibly his general manner, but spoken by him, and his minister, Baruch, wrote the words down as uttered. "The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Take thee a roll of a book and write therein all the words that I have spoken to thee against Israel. . . . Then Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord" (Jer. xxxvi. 1, 2, 4). And again later, when the profane King of Judah had thrown the roll of the prophecy into the fire, "Jeremiah took another roll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, and he wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim, King of Judah, had burned" (ver. 32). Any difference that might

be imagined between oral utterance and writing, as though the inspired prophet might speak, but if he wrote he would not be in the same rapt condition, such difference is disallowed, because the written prophecy may on occasion itself be spoken.<sup>1</sup> The prophetic books of the Old Testament represent a condition of the writer's being, they are written under a possession of his being by the divine afflatus, the same as if he spoke as Jacob spoke or as Balaam spoke. The account the prophet Ezekiel gives of his vision, the propaedeutic of written and not spoken prophecy, lacks nothing of supernatural awe: "The appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it I fell upon my face,

<sup>1</sup> In the Epistle to the Romans we have (xvi. 22): "I Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you in the Lord"; in 2 Thess. iii. 17, "The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is the token in every Epistle." The Epistles may seem to be written by an amanuensis from dictation, and St Paul, as it were, signs them, that is to say, the blessing that concludes, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," is in the Apostle's handwriting. As an unusual distinction, St Paul calls the attention of the Galatians to his having written to them "with my own hand" (Gal. vi. 2). The inspired Epistles of St Paul, then, might be spoken, as the inspired prophecies of Jeremiah, as instanced in the text. (It may be noted that the abnormal manner of writing is done very well with an amanuensis, the dictator speaking the words as he hears them, and being unaware of the argument precisely as when he writes himself.)

and I heard the voice of One that spake" (Ezek. ii. 1). They are not his own words he writes, but words he hears. So David says (2 Kings [Sam.] xxiii. 2): "The Spirit of the Lord hath spoken by me and His Word by my tongue."

But there are expositors who wish to minimise the supernatural element in creed equally as in life and character, who indeed intend **Prophecy discounted by expositors.** that it should be altogether eliminated everywhere, and not merely minimised, and who lend their assistance to that desired consummation. These learned men represent that the Hebrew prophet is more preacher than prophet. He denounces the infidelity and corruption of the time, he exhorts his countrymen to virtue and to piety, he foretells that calamity will overtake them if they disregard his counsels, or conversely that they will prosper and see the ruin of their enemies instead in the contrary event. The times are those of the downfall and destruction of Jerusalem by the King of Babylon. The people are encouraged in their actual or impending misfortune by the idea of a future Deliverer. It hardly amounts to prophecy; there are not many points of resemblance between the Messiah of the Hebrew prophets and the actual Christ. Or again, such a prophecy as that of the over-



throw of Tyre (Is. xxiii.) was not, perhaps, difficult to deliver.

Prophetic inspiration, when unknown and future events are foretold, would no doubt, say these expositors, be of the character that has been argued, but prophecy in the Old Testament is not as supposed. Meanwhile, the style of the prophecies is the style of a school, just as there is a style of the Homeridae or of the Pastoral poets, from Theocritus to whoever it may be. "Thus saith the Lord," or "The word of the Lord came to me, saying," would belong to the style, and not intend that the prophet believed himself to be repeating actual words of the Deity.

Such exposition is not without justice, but important connections are missed, partly because

<p>But in- effectively; prediction not the sole super- natural note.</p>	<p>there is a bias in one direction, and the mind passes by adverse evidences, never seeing them. The prophecies, foretellings of future events, are more definite than the expositors allow, and the method the expositors</p>
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employ is one of generalisation rather than of careful scrutiny of the particular prophecies that we have in the books. The treasurer of Queen Candace in the Apostolic age (Acts viii. 27-34) was rightly puzzled by the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah (liii.), what

connection had it with anyone or anything ; what was it all about ? It requires the utmost ingenuity of any expositor who attempts to find for the chapter any other than its fulfilment in the Passion of our Lord, and except for the interpretation of that fulfilment we have no evidence of a Jewish tradition of a suffering Messiah ; the sufferer is the fallen Jewish people, and not their expected Deliverer. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man ?"

Further, it is not foretelling future events that makes a writing inspired (so that if it is not veritable that predictions are made, neither is it that inspiration is present) ; the extraordinary character of the prophetic books lies also in their confident expression of justice and declaration of the judgment of God, "I the Lord search the heart" (Jer. xvii. 10). "What seest thou, Jeremiah ? And I said, Figs" (xxiv. 3). And equally as the prophet has in himself no words, as he must have words given him, to describe the unknown future, so neither has he words except by inspiration to express the supernatural world. The pictures of Isaiah vi. and of Daniel vii. are not to be made into a matter of style.

The prophets are of very various social degree. Jeremiah was son of Hilkiah, the

great high priest of Josiah's reign, who restored the temple worship. Jeremiah was under the protection of Ahikam, the son of "school" of Shaphan (Jer. xxvi. 24), a man of prophets. so much distinction that his son, Gedaliah, was left governor of Judea when King Zedekiah and multitudes of Jews had been carried captive to Babylon (xl. 5). A large portion of Jeremiah's book is concerned with the political history of his time, and he is obviously himself a person of consequence in the progress of events. And what is to be said of Daniel, the highest personage in the kingdom of Darius (Dan. vi. 3)? On the other hand, Amos is "one of the herdsmen of Tekoah" (Amos i. 1). These several prophets do not appear to belong to a common school,<sup>1</sup> but to be individual holy men, on whom the power of prophecy is bestowed. The style, then, would not be the style of a school, but would belong to the subject. The prophets, as their personal character appears in their writings, were not men to adopt a style already created, at the same time that their language

<sup>1</sup> There certainly once existed communities of prophets, as at Bethel (4 [2] Kings ii. 3; cp. 1 Kings [Sam.] x. 3), but that does not imply a "school" in the literary sense of the word, nor hardly in the ecclesiastical. In the religious decadence of the later kingdoms of Israel and Judah, it seems likely that the communities were at a low ebb.

is so grand and effective that one can hardly look behind it ; the prophets were not Homerids, but each of them a Homer.

Though the prophecies, foretellings, of the Old Testament were minimised or disallowed, **Prophetical** that would not affect the position **inspiration** that the prophet who tells of future **direct.** and unknown events and who speaks

the language of the supernatural world, supposing there to be such a person, is of necessity directly inspired ; apart from inspiration his mind is a blank on the topics to which he addresses himself, and he may even have no words to use of his own regarding them. Thus, for example, if the question is whether a sick man is to recover or not, I have the words, if God reveals to me which thing to say. But if the question is instead, what will be happening to A. B. a year to-morrow, I cannot say he will be hiding in an inner chamber, unless the words are given me, because numberless other things might be happening which would be expressed in their different words. That is quite clear. In prophecy the inspiration must be determinate, and sometimes it must also be verbal. Prophetical inspiration, if prophecy exists, is beyond question.

Besides the books of the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, there are other portions of the Old



Testament that have a prophetical character, as, *e.g.*, numbers of the Psalms. Prophecy occupies so large a space, that the entire sacred

**The** volume is denoted by "the law and **prophetical** the prophets" (Luke xvi. 16); the **portion of** preaching of His Kingdom by Christ **Scripture.** (xxiv. 25, etc.), and by His Apostles (2 Peter 1-19, etc.), makes continual reference to the witness of the Old Testament prophets.

In the New Testament the Apocalypse is a prophetical book, and there are passages of prophetical character to be found in the Epistles, a striking example in 2 Thes. i. 6-12. Prophetical inspiration is the supreme type, which may stand to include every species. Or else, possibly there is no difference of species. The Holy Ghost is the fountain of all inspiration that belongs to Holy Scripture in any of its parts, which is the Word of God. And the Holy Ghost is He "who spoke by the prophets."

## CHAPTER IV

### DIDACTIC AND HISTORICAL INSPIRATION

THE second species of Inspiration, as it is imagined, is that of the didactic books, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, some of the Psalms, *e.g.* Ps. cxviii [cxix], and the Epistles of the New Testament. Here the inspired writer has not to be informed of what he does not know, but to be guided in what is common knowledge. The difference of moral teaching by Inspiration is that it is unerring. Others might have given the moral precepts of the Old Testament and of the New (except the reported sayings of Christ, or at least certain of them), but along with such teachers there would be still others to give opposing or certainly different precepts. Under inspiration, the writer is enabled to pick his steps among the varieties of human opinion.

Even then—the learned men, the external expositors, would represent—the teaching of the sacred writers is not flawless. They are not

emancipated from the limitations of their time and country. They do not teach the highest and ultimate; their being inspired **Asserted limitations of Scriptural morality** provides only that what they teach should not be wrong; given the morality of the age, it is a perfect expression of that. But it is not the absolute right, independent of conditions; and in the progress of the ages there are sentences that become inapplicable. Unlike in this to the moral teaching of our Lord, as given in the Gospel.

As regards the Old Testament—our expositors remark—the imperfection is not questioned.

**In the Old Testament** Our Lord Himself repeatedly condemns the Mosaic precept, at any rate as it had been understood and interpreted. “It has been said, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all” (Matt. v. 33-34; cp. Lev. xix. 12, etc.).

But also in the New Testament the same temporary and imperfect application is sometimes found. Thus with St Paul **And in the New.** the inferiority of woman to man exists in its crudest conception (Eph. v. 23, 24, etc.); no form of political society is contemplated except the monarchical, or at least under monarchical conditions (1 Peter ii. 13, etc.);

the brute creation is regarded as having no claim to merciful treatment (1 Cor. ix. 9).

These defects, we are instructed, must not be understood to qualify the inspired truth of the Scripture text. It is not that anything is wrongly inculcated, but merely that there is morality beyond, which the ages are to reveal, and especially the Church in her teaching office; just as plane geometry may be rightly reasoned without the knowledge of spherical. What, then, Divine Inspiration is as exhibited in the didactic portion of Holy Scripture, we are able to learn by consideration of what is written. The sacred writer may write as any ordinary person would, may be unconscious of doing anything else, but he is guarded against writing any wrong word by the divine influence that is upon him and by the divine protection that he trusts to possess. Proverb and precept have a superior wisdom beyond the achievement of other writings, because they were composed by men extraordinarily endowed with the Spirit of God.

The elenchus of such representation is to deny the several allegations of which it is made up.

**The allegations unproved.** For example, our Lord does not censure the Mosaic Law, only the "traditions" that belonged to His time. "Moses said, Honour thy father and thy



mother. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban" (Mark vii. 10, 11). The Law itself He makes irreversible: "Till heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law" (Matt. v. 18). There is no record of His correcting the inspired utterances of David and of Solomon.

Again, the moral elevation is not subject to any limitations of country or of age. The universality of the teaching of Holy Scripture, which may be held a note of its divine origin, is testified by its historical acceptance as the guide of succeeding generations since the establishment of the Christian Church, and as the norm with which our moral appreciations must agree. Such a position is not shaken by particular and occasional instances that may be adduced of divergence from modern sentiment, which is indeed for its part both ephemeral and endemic.

The converse may be said. Instead of the inspired writers expressing a narrow view, it is the breadth of their moral teaching that marks them as inspired in this reference.

**Independence of racial and local character.** Their independence of racial and local character is evidence that the personality of the writers is superseded, that the language is not their own. How, for example, did David write, "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire;

burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou hast not required" (Ps. xxxix. [xl.] 7) — David, whose life's regret was that he might not himself build the Temple (3 [1] Kings viii. 17; 1 Paralip. [Chron.] xvii. 1 foll.)? St Paul again, it is true, had his quarrel with those Jews who would Judaize the Church. He boasted himself none the less to be a Jew of Jews (2 Cor. xi. 22, etc.). And in the Epistle to the Romans he makes the offspring and heirs of Abraham not to be the blood descendants, but the Christian Church! "They who are the children of the flesh," he writes (ix. 8), "those are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Another quite inexpugnable position is this. What are distinguished as didactic books of

<p><b>Didactic and prophetical mixed together.</b></p>	<p>Holy Scripture do not contain moral precepts only, as is wilfully and blindly assumed, but are repositories also of theological doctrine. To be extraordinarily gifted</p>
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with the Spirit, to have the mind elevated and its faculties enlarged, does not make it possible to write, "Him that knew no sin, God has made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). Nor yet to write this hard saying (to the semi-Universalist of our time), "Whosoever denieth

the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John ii. 23). The prophetic and didactic books, as soon as separated, combine again, through the basic element in both of reference to the supernatural world and revelation of the Divine Nature.

Nor are they clearly distinguishable in style. The Book of Proverbs in some of its portions bears a resemblance to some of the Psalms; others of the Psalms have the same phraseology and poetic manner as portions, *e.g.*, of Isaiah. In the New Testament the language of St Peter (1 Peter i., ii.) and of St Paul (1 Cor. xiii.) has at times the rhythm of Hebrew poetry; it is the same confident language about divine things as the prophets use, their easy wealth of words.

Thus there is no separate variety of inspiration that can be assigned to the didactic books. Granted that for prophecy—in order to tell a future and unknown event—inspiration may be requisite of word by word, the necessity no less belongs to that other portion of the prophet's office, the revelation of the Mind and Will of God. It only does not seem so extraordinary to ourselves, because while we see the prophecy to be true in its fulfilment, the truth of the revelation has no such sensible attestation. But the office of revelation of the truth belongs

also to the didactic writers, and if the inspiration required for that is the same as for prophecy, then there are not two kinds, one belonging to the prophet and the other to the teacher. If SS. Peter and Paul declare to us the Will of God, it cannot be as knowing it of themselves ("Who hath known the mind of the Lord?"—Rom. xi. 34), but it must be directly and concretely revealed to them; as much as if it were the prophecy of "the Virgin that shall conceive and bear a Son" (Is. vii. 14). The claim is gently made. But it is made. "It was revealed to the prophets that not to themselves but to you they ministered these things which are now declared to you by them that have preached to you the Gospel by the Holy Ghost (ἐν Πνεύματι Ἀγίῳ) sent down from heaven" (1 Peter i. 12). "Our Gospel was not delivered unto you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thes. i. 5).

The remaining books of Holy Scripture, not being prophetic nor didactic, would be classed as historical. The historical books have no relation to what is unknown, to divine and supernatural knowledge, but are entirely occupied with things and persons belonging to our world, and events that have actually occurred in it; it is not required that all in

**Historical  
inspiration  
apart from  
moral  
beauty.**



the story should be wise and virtuous, only if it was done and said and has been faithfully recorded. Thus the sentiments of Job's friends may be good and commendable sometimes, but we cannot quote them as authoritative, nor yet the language of Job himself; Job's friends are blamed and he is not wholly commended in the sequel; the words of the disputants are recorded as being their words and not as the inspired word of God.

So the history of the conquest and occupation of Palestine by the Jews, like other such histories, has many a black and bloody page,<sup>1</sup> and if it had not, the record would certainly be supposed to have been garbled. As inspired history, the only resultant quality is that it is truly told. It is not told (as the Scotch Covenanters grotesquely imagined) for our imitation but for our warning (1 Cor. x. 11).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the English occupation of Britain our progenitors exterminated the existing inhabitants more completely than the Jews are said to have done with Canaanites and Amalekites. See Green, *History of the English People*.

<sup>2</sup> The "utter destruction" of the Canaanites which appears to be commanded by Jehovah in Deut. vii. 2, is rather a negative precept, forbidding intercourse with them and participation in their idolatrous worship (vv. 3-6), and is sufficiently accomplished by the expulsion (Judges i. 28) of the population. This further appears in Exod. xxiii. 27-33, where the expulsion is to occupy several years. See also Num. xxxiii. 53, etc. The circumstance has been made too much of by hostile critics. There cannot be an invasion

As to the truth of the Jewish history, the date of the larger portion is so remote that to discover contemporary record is difficult, and belongs to the province of the learned in Oriental history. The languages, the forms of thought and consequently of expression, are diverse, and the recognition of the same event under different names and with another-sided description, is difficult and precarious; the dates in ancient documents are

without bloodshed, and the dispossessed peoples were corrupt and corrupting (see Num. xxv. 1-3). We must distinguish between the orders of the Jewish leader and a divine command. And we must observe that, when Joshua has "consumed" his enemies, "the rest entered into fenced cities" (Josh. x. 20).

<sup>1</sup> The account given by Herodotus (ii. 141) of the destruction of the host of Sennacherib, if the identification is rightly made, is that field-mice during the night gnawed the quivers and bows of the warriors and the handles of their shields, so that they fled defenceless in the morning and were slaughtered! The rationalist historian may make what he can of it. The account of 4 [2] Kings xix. 35, 2 Paralip. [Chron.] xxxii. 21, that the Assyrians were slaughtered in the night by "an angel of the Lord," is more dignified and no greater demand on faith. In Herodotus, the opposing army is that of Sethos, King of Egypt, but composed not of his warriors but of "traders and craftsmen and market-folk," which may be the Egyptian way of glossing over that it was a Jewish army that was really concerned in the victory. On the other hand, neither of the extant Jewish accounts expressly declares it to have been a Jewish army and not an Egyptian.

little reliable. Apparent discrepancies are discovered under such conditions between the Old Testament account and some Persian or Assyrian record, but they regard points of detail; the rest is neither confirmed nor contradicted.

Better opportunity is found by critics in arraigning the authenticity, not of the accounts given, but of the books themselves, which are discovered by allusions contained in them to belong to a later date than that of their titular authorship. Thus the book of Leviticus would represent the ritual determined in the religious revival under Hezekiah; the book of Daniel belong to a time subsequent to the return from the Captivity.

The meaning, then, when the historical books are called inspired—if we allow the revisers their **Inspiration** say—is mainly that they are books **in Old** of sacred history, concerning the **Testament** Chosen People, “of whom after the **history** flesh Christ came” (Rom. ix. 5). It may be claimed that they are written in a super-excellent manner and style, with brevity and descriptive force, to be set alongside the best secular histories without yielding the palm.<sup>1</sup> In a general aspect, they furnish us

<sup>1</sup> In schools a historical interest and ability is recognised first and last most easily and certainly by what the youthful

with a truthful account of Jewish history ; at any rate they represent faithfully the history of the nation as conceived by itself. But—allowing still the considerations proposed—they are not without error for the critical student, and in whatever sense they are written by Divine Inspiration, it is not in a sense that excludes error.

In the New Testament, it is granted that the super-excellence of the Four Gospels is still more conspicuous. Inspiration is present. Otherwise it would be an extraordinary achievement to have written such a narrative at the date of its publication, in the country of Palestine, and if the authors were Jews of the middle class without special culture or education. Some imagine the Four Gospels to have a common source, a matrix-gospel, but their variations in design and in arrangement are too marked to admit very well of the suggestion. Nevertheless, with such variations, the main facts of the history

**And in the  
Gospels.**

historian writes of Old Testament history. The Old Testament, like Thucydides, exhibits events and actions on a circumscribed stage, and the motives and passions of the actors, the clash of contending interests, the occasions and final causes, are more clearly discussed. History repeats itself, as human nature remains the same, and the study of Old Testament history may be regarded as an unimpeachable propaedeutic to the study of history in general.



are consistently given, and when one Gospel contradicts another, it is on a point of indifference. Whether the fig-tree cursed by Christ withered immediately (Matt.) or was only found so the next morning (Mark), hardly concerns the narrative. The truth of Divine Inspiration is larger and of another kind. Also, however impossible it was that any one of His disciples should comprehend the mind and spirit of Jesus, the sacred writers are enabled to present us with a true portraiture and an identical, at least in the Synoptics. If Old Testament history is inspired history because it gives us an account of the Sacred People, much more are the Gospels, because they give us an account of Christ.

Such, then, is made out to be the difference of Inspiration when it is bestowed not to reveal the future nor yet to teach truths of morality and religion, but to supply a faithful chronicle of sacred events; the matter is fairly and moderately stated, and a reasonable mind readily accepts the account. Let us consider. Yes, we agree that verbal accuracy is not to be found in history or narrative of Holy Scripture. For one thing, the text we have is a copy a hundred times removed from the original. The writers are protected against error, but are we to suppose the same of every

single copyist? Is some obscure scribe, is every scribe who has had to do with the Jewish or Christian Scriptures, not indeed a complete Nehemiah or Matthew, but as it were belonging to their school, sharing with them the Divine election and assistance? But that cannot be. For one existing text differs from another, and we must find one copyist accurate and another not. Few people are aware of the comparatively modern date of Greek MSS., and those of the New Testament are not clear exceptions. The Septuagint Version is earlier than any Hebrew MS. we possess of the Old Testament, and the Vulgate Version than any Greek MS. of the New. So that when one or other version appears not to be translating our text, it may be the more probable explanation that our text is faulty. Only for possible errors of copyists, it cannot be certainly affirmed that Holy Scripture as we have it is verbally perfect.

Then, such perfection not existing, the question must inevitably arise whether the **Errors (?)** condonation that is at hand for **of the** the mistakes of copyists may at **writer.** all embrace prior mistakes of the inspired writers themselves.<sup>1</sup> "We have this treasure of the Gospel in earthen vessels"

<sup>1</sup> The Church certainly refuses to allow it. See Chapter X. below.

(2 Cor. iv. 7). It might not be all gain if the vessels were of silver. There is a human character attaching to the records that recommends them, and a rigid accuracy—or rather perhaps the dehumanising effect of the control that produced it—would occasion less interest to be felt and less understanding to be possible. Suppose the four Gospels to be really copies of the same lost original, they have been ingeniously diversified so as each to have an interest of its own. If they had been more faithful transcripts, they would lose much of their evidential value. They would be recognised to be the same account of but a single witness, instead of being, as otherwise imagined, the common story of four. But if the four accounts are thus diverse, the differences may not always be easily reconcilable.

It does not therefore seem improbable, it is perhaps in some sense true, that, even apart from mistakes of copying, the books of Holy Scripture are not word-perfect in the meticulous sense of the critical school. The discrepancies, however, will be unimportant, of no material application. In a vital matter, where error would delude us regarding the actual subject in hand, then, if the writing is done by Divine Inspiration, we may feel assured that no error will exist in it. Whether any error may be

made by the copyist in such case is not so sure. It may be prevented by the providence of God. Or it may be permitted, in order that Holy Scripture should not have a value beyond its design, that we should look for our creed not to the written words, but as they are expounded and as the doctrine is defined by the authority of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

There is, then, no such error existing as would disprove any Scripture to have been written by Divine Inspiration, or would make a distinct species of inspiration to be discoverable in historical narrative. The argument would be something like this. Granted that a different sort of inspiration suffices for historical writing, that then the words themselves need not be given, as in prophecy, nor the ethical and theological perceptions of the writer be supernaturally augmented, as in didactic; granted that a lower inspiration, if we may

<sup>1</sup> A good example is found in Mark xiii. 32, where Jesus is recorded to have said that when the Judgment Day should be was not known to men or angels, "nor yet to the Son." The last five words are lacking in the speech as reported by St Matthew (xxiv. 36). The explanation is either that the words were added by an Arian copyist in St Mark, or else that through their being capable of Arian interpretation they were omitted in later copies of St Matthew. But the Church defines that the Son is in all things equal to the Father, and is omniscient (cp. John xvi. 30).



call it so, is proper for that species of inspired writing—still the higher inspiration can be employed for it, and, for aught we know, may be employed. Only the Röntgen rays will photograph what is covered from view; the ordinary rays will suffice to light the room; but the Röntgen rays will do that also. Supposing that anywhere in Holy Scripture any of the writers write not of themselves, but the ideas and words being given to them, they might write a narrative of events under those conditions equally as a prophecy of the future or a revelation of the Will of God.

There are narratives and narratives. The book of Ruth or the first seven chapters of 1 Kings [Samuel] are not history in their style or topic; they are personal and biographical. Then the historical portions of Scripture are not always distinct books but may be cumbered with didactic or prophetic matter. The historical portion of Daniel is easily divided from the rest and presents less difficulty, but how can the historical portion of Jeremiah be divided? The institution of the Passover (Exod. xii.) and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (xx.) are hardly that kind of writing for which a less full inspiration suffices.

Turning to the New Testament, we have in the Gospels the story of the acts and move-

ments of Jesus, but we have also the report of His discourses. Are the discourses imaginary in part or in the whole, or are they sentence by sentence as actually spoken? If the last, they are not written by recollection, but as given by inspiration. "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv. 26). As was clear beyond mistake in the instance of the Magnificat (above, chap. ii.). But the discourses are frequently mixed up with the acts and movements, making one context, one story, with them, belonging, as it would seem, to the same occasion of writing. Is it likely, is it possible, that there should be one species of inspiration up to such a point in a chapter, and then the few following verses written by the aid of another species, and the first species resuming again? The light not constant, but waxing and waning from paragraph to paragraph as the writing progresses? Is it not the true and right explanation that in any single composition, whatever the manner of writing anywhere, the same manner belongs to the whole production. But in the Gospels uniformity can only be of the supposed highest kind of inspiration, verbal inspiration, because by that alone, as is clearly apparent, can the discourses be real and not literary invention.

In truth the distinctions among different kinds of inspiration belong to the critic rather than to the writings, which frequently overstep the boundaries his fiat would assign them. And especially the books of Holy Scripture belong to a country and to a time when the literary art was undetermined. The style of any such early writer is the style of the mood and of the moment, without regard to his particular literary business, and the distinction among kinds of inspiration is doctrinaire, because the writings have themselves no such hedged distinction to suggest it. What inspiration is, what writing by Divine Inspiration, that is what we have to understand, if possible for us and so far as possible, one thing and not several things, some one description of circumstance with which the inspired writings may appear in accord, in their several portions and in their several entities. The gifts of the Spirit are of various kinds (1 Cor. xii.), the gift of tongues not the same as the gift of healing; one has one gift, another another. But the gift of inspired utterance (prophecy) is one of the kinds, and there are not kinds of that. At least it is a possible hypothesis.

## CHAPTER V

### ST PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

By the more assertive of modern critics it is now decided that the writer of the Epistles

**Supposed  
contradiction  
between  
Acts and  
Epistles.**

of St Paul is a different person from the missionary Apostle whose journeys are recorded in the latter half of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Which is the real St Paul, whether the account of the Acts is fictitious or the Epistles unauthentic, or whether both presentations are unhistorical, whether the real St Paul has still to be created by the Higher Criticism—these things may be variously decided. But the difference between the Acts and Epistles is certain. So the critics determine for us.

The criticism belongs to the general assault on Christianity—even though its exponents usurp the Christian name—and to the modern manner of it, not assailing doctrine or practice, but attacking the credentials of Christianity,



the written records of its origin and earliest years. But the particular attack in question is not a formidable example. For the main proof of the difference of St Paul's personality in Acts and Epistles is found in the opposite representation in either of his attitudes towards his fellow-countrymen. But this will not do for the ordinary reader. There is the same anti-Jewish *hostility* in Acts xviii. 6, etc., as in Gal. v. 12, etc.; on the other hand the *tenderness* and *devotion* towards his own nation, which is expressed in Rom. xi., etc., finds example in the constancy with which, according to the narrative of the Acts (xvii. 1, 2, 10, etc.), after every rebuff and every outrage, St Paul still seeks out first the Jews in every city; both in Epistles and Acts he asserts *the same pride in his own Jewish origin* (2 Cor. xi. 2, etc.; Acts xxii. 3, xxiii. 6).

On the general issue, it may be observed that the most faithful biographical portraiture will **Letters and** never be quite the same as the **biography** appearance of the man in his **compared.** letters; partly because any letter expresses the mood of the occasion and not the whole mind; partly because biography does not show the mood at all. Also the discrepancies discovered are not of sufficient size or certainty to outweigh the traditional

ascription of the Epistles to St Paul as their author, and when the tradition is questioned, the internal evidence of the Epistles that supports it, is too little considered. Or again the internal evidence of the Acts. Nothing in the New Testament, nothing in the entire Bible, no literary composition wherever and whatever, has more upon it the stamp of genuineness than the narrative of St Paul's journeys in the Acts. The Epistles on their part are all of a high order of excellence, which is not commonly the character of forgeries; all display the burning ardour of the Apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. viii. 31-*fin.*; 2 Cor. xi. 28-31; 1 Thess. iii. 9-*fin.*, etc.), which it would be impossible in such simplicity to affect and not to feel, as must be the way of the literary impersonator.

If the Epistles are St Paul's, and if the history of the Acts is genuine, any discrepancies that are discovered can be no more than such as result from the particular aspect of one or other writer or are consequent on our mistaking after such lapse of time; they will not be large differences, they must not be allowed to be large; with them, allowing for their difficulty, unexplainable, undeniable, the conclusion is merely that they are there, the conclusion is not any impeachment of the

sincerity, nor yet of the inspiration, of these books of the New Testament.

Still a distinction is drawn by sundry critics between some of the Epistles as being genuine and others as not being. There is no reference to those others in early writers. But the critics years ago decided that sentences most evidently echoing the sayings of our Lord or alluding to acts and incidents of the Gospel, sentences occurring in the earliest writers, a St Clement or a St Justin, were no evidence for the existence of our Gospels, as the quotations might be from something else. Accordingly, inasmuch as it would be no proof (in the estimation of the critics) that the Epistle to Philemon was known, because some early writer talked of "St Paul the aged and now also the prisoner of Jesus Christ," so it makes the case no worse that no early writer uses that expression.

The rejection of an Epistle may perhaps issue from dissatisfaction felt with something that is found in it. The critics are disposed to believe it unauthentic, because they deem its doctrine to be of later development. The Epistle to the Hebrews enlarges upon the sacerdotal character of the Christian ministry, not less but more

real than the Jewish priesthood, with Sacrifice and Altar of similar religious notion (xiii. 10), and thus was displeasing to the undogmatic Christianity which it is desired to substantiate. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians declared the actuality of Antichrist, and anticipated the doctrine of the Apocalypse; the Second Epistle to Timothy asserted beyond any evading the inspiration of Holy Scripture (iii. 16), as did also the Second Epistle of St Peter (i. 20, 21), which besides included under Scripture the writings of St Paul (iii. 16)!

Second Epistles are specially attacked beyond others as being dubious. The notion is that they take the first Epistle for their model, copying its phrases, and even repeating its expressions, while introducing sufficient difference of topic and design to disguise the forgery. There is also allusion to acts and occasions that belong to the first Epistle. The second Epistle, it is alleged, is always inferior to the first both in subject and in style.

The argument is somewhat maladroit, because such ground of suspicion establishes the authenticity of the first Epistle, and some recent critics are by no means willing that this should be done. Meanwhile the sort of subordination, hardly inferiority, that in fact exists, is in



consequence of the Second Epistles being supplementary to the first (except the Second Epistle of St John which is perhaps a private letter), but it is not true that excellence and importance are wanting to Second Epistles. On the contrary, it is because of their special apologetic value that the critics endeavour to discredit them. The Second Epistle of St Peter is suspected because a large portion is almost a verbal transcript from the Epistle of St Jude.<sup>1</sup> That would be no real point of objection. How it takes place under Divine Inspiration will be examined on a later page.

Whether there is agreement or disagreement between the Epistles of St Paul and the Acts,

**The Acts illustrative of St Paul's Epistle.** it is impossible that they should not be compared together, at any rate in the case of such Epistles as were ostensibly written during the period covered by the Acts. There may not be much to compare, the allusions of the Epistles may be outside the history (which is brief and often no more than summary) of the Acts, but still if the occasion of the Epistle, or of any portion

<sup>1</sup> The date commonly assigned to the Epistle of St Jude would make it later than the other. Moreover the literary appearance is rather of its being the copy and not the original. Of course, if 2 Peter is a forgery, the date may be anything within the first century or even in the early years of the second. Its earliest mention is by St Clement !

of it, can be discovered, if the situation can be at all more clearly made out, it is of great interest and may give considerable help in the elucidation.

It is only the Epistles of St Paul that are concerned, because his connection with Corinth, Ephesus, etc., appears in the Acts, whereas of the journeys of St Peter we have no record after his baptism of Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts x.),<sup>1</sup> and hence we do not know when his connection was made, and of what nature it was, with the numerous peoples to whom he addresses his First Epistle; the Epistles of other writers bear no address, and though the occasion of their being written is often not obscure, it cannot be fitted in with any description in the Acts. The personality of the writer is important to ascertain beyond what his letters may reveal; other Epistolary writers belong to the Gospel narrative, but of St Paul the Acts is our only history.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians is one of the second Epistles that the critical wish to be spurious. If so, it must be considered a very clever imitation of St Paul's manner and the local allusions are cleverly arranged. The Greek

<sup>1</sup> St Paul writes of him as being at Antioch along with himself (Gal. ii. 11). This is probably the occasion of Acts xv. 35. Also the First Epistle of St Peter (v. 13), is written from Rome.

is not so lucid and easy as in other Epistles, but for this there is explanation at hand.<sup>1</sup> The

**Authenticity and occasion of 2 Corinthians.** rejection of the Epistle belongs rather to the unreasoning hostility that has been described. The Epistle seems to bear a date not long posterior to the First. In

*that* St Paul had written to condemn a case of unlawful marriage being condoned, or even perhaps well received (*ὁμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστέ*) within the Christian community and he proposes to come to Corinth by way of Macedonia (xvi. 5), and he will spend the winter at Corinth, going from thence to Ephesus (ver. 8) on his way to Jerusalem. He sent Titus with this Epistle, and the second Epistle follows upon the report that Titus brought back (vii. 6-13). When St Paul writes the Second Epistle, he is already come into Macedonia by way of Troas (ii. 12, 13).

This itinerary seems to agree with that expressed in Acts xix. 21. The sequel there is, that St Paul goes through Macedonia into Greece (xx. 2)—perhaps, however, not going to Corinth (see 2 Cor. i. 23)—and after three months returns through Macedonia to Troas

<sup>1</sup> The different words and phrases might be those of Asia or of Macedonia; the involved style belongs to the stress of the occasion.

and thence along the Asia Minor coast to Syria and Palestine. He does not go to Ephesus, but the Ephesian presbyters come to Miletus to find him. He wished to be at Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts xx. 16).<sup>1</sup> Both Epistles are written subsequently to the tumult in Ephesus (Acts xix. 23-*fin.*), if we are to understand the phrase in 1 Cor. xv. 32—"I fought with beasts (*ἐθηριομάχησα*) at Ephesus"—as referring to that occasion, and in the Second Epistle St Paul alludes to "troubles in Asia" (i. 8),<sup>2</sup> which may mean the same. There needs no more precise delimitation. Both Epistles are written after Greece has been left for Macedonia, between then and that visit to Jerusalem which led to St Paul's imprisonment and his consequent sending to Rome.<sup>3</sup>

Corinth St Paul first beheld on his second missionary journey in company with Silas (Acts xv. 40), proceeding there next after his celebrated visit to Athens, during which he preached on the Areopagus. He

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Cor. xvi. 8, he is to "tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost," but this may only mean for so long as to allow for reaching Jerusalem by Pentecost; or else the itinerary is again changed.

<sup>2</sup> "Asia" in the New Testament is the western portion of what we now call Asia Minor.

<sup>3</sup> In 2 Cor. xii. 14 and xiii. 1 St Paul is "a third time" coming to Corinth, his second intended visit having been abandoned (i. 23), and neither is this third apparently paid.



remained at Corinth eighteen months (or more, Acts xviii. 18) finding there Aquila, a Jew, who with his wife Priscilla<sup>1</sup> worked at his own trade, and with whom he lived, supporting himself by tent-making. At the end of that time he left the city, proposing to go to Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> to keep some feast (ver. 21), probably then also Pentecost, and crossed to Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla with him. He left them at Ephesus.

During St Paul's absence there arrived at Ephesus a certain Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures" (xviii. 24). He appears to have been already in some sense a Christian,<sup>3</sup> but imperfectly instructed, not knowing even of Christian baptism; he baptised, but only as St John Baptist.<sup>4</sup> Him Aquila and Priscilla found and taught all Christian doctrine, as they had learnt it from St Paul, and Apollos presently

<sup>1</sup> It is a puzzle why Priscilla's name sometimes precedes that of her husband—"Priscilla and Aquila" (Acts xviii. 18; Rom. xvi. 3). We have "Mary and Joseph" (Luke ii. 16), but no ordinary usage can be inferred from that. Is Priscilla possibly of special prominence in the community, as Chloe (1 Cor. i. 11) and Phoebe (Rom. xvi. 1, 2)?

<sup>2</sup> But the text is uncertain in the passage.

<sup>3</sup> "Instructed in the way of the Lord" can hardly mean anything else, especially in the Acts. Cp. xxii. 4; xxiv. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Hence St Paul on his return finds believers so baptised and baptises them in the Christian form (Acts xix. 1-3).

passed over into Greece and came to Corinth, where he had a great missionary success, following upon St Paul's extended stay there (Acts xviii. 27, 28; 1 Cor. iii. 6. "I planted, Apollos watered").

While Apollos was at Corinth, St Paul had returned to Ephesus and settled there, as

**Ephesus.** formerly at Corinth, probably under similar conditions, if Aquila and

Priscilla had not left.<sup>1</sup> The number of converts made at Ephesus and their fervour was shown by books on magic being burnt to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver (drachmae, = £1700). A further sordid but very practical proof of the progress of the Christian faith was the pagan tumult raised in the city, when the image-makers saw their trade in danger (Acts xix. 27). The personal ascendancy of St Paul and the affection felt for him, was demonstrated at the final parting (xx. 37), when "there was much weeping among them all," that is, among the presbyters from Ephesus, "and falling on the neck of Paul they kissed him."

It is fortunate that we have such account of Ephesus, because there is not the same detail about Corinth. But it is not to be supposed that St Paul's eighteen months' stay in the

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Cor. xvi. 19 the Epistle being written from Ephesus, greetings are sent from Aquila and Priscilla.

latter city would be appreciably different in result from his two years in the former. Moreover we have sufficient indication. At Corinth Jesus admonished the Apostle in a vision. "I have much people in this city" (xviii. 10). And in his Epistles St Paul praises the Corinthians for their zeal and sincerity (1 Cor. i. 4-7; 2 Cor. vii. 7). Elsewhere he pictures what the zeal of his converts was. "I bear you record that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me." But this is in writing to the Galatians (iv. 15), who are of semi-Oriental blood or at least of Oriental associations, and who are therefore warmer in feeling. The devotion felt towards the person of the Apostle might be due to admiration, as he displayed supernatural powers; or to gratitude, as he was the messenger of the hope of eternal life; or to gratitude again for the charity of his miraculous cures of diseases.

At Corinth, however, there grew up a discordant element. Not to be set down to the Jewish colony, which was equally opposed at Ephesus as at Corinth; in both cities St Paul had early to cease preaching in the synagogue and find another room (Acts xviii. 7; xix. 9). Corinth had the distinction that first Crispus, the

**Disorders  
in the  
Corinthian  
Church.**

ruler of the Synagogue, embraced Christianity, and later Sosthenes, who held the same office, became a confessor of the faith, and was beaten by the rabid Jew mob (xviii. 8, 17).<sup>1</sup> The trouble began after St Paul had quitted the city, after even Apollos had.

Corinth from its position was a great trading place, many coming and going, of all nationalities. Just as at Antioch (Acts xv. 1; Gal. ii. 12), so at Corinth, Jews arrived who were Christians by profession, but out of obedience (*τῶν ἀπειθούντων*, Rom. xv. 31). Contrary to the edict of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 23-29) they endeavoured to impose upon the Corinthian Christians the obligations of the Mosaic Law.<sup>2</sup> These "false Apostles" (2 Cor. xi. 13), "false brethren" (ver. 26), are St Paul's worst foes, more baleful than the unconverted Jews and the persecuting heathen.<sup>3</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> His name is attached to the First Epistle to the Corinthians (i. 1).

<sup>2</sup> It was not a wholly unnatural conception. Christianity may appear to be the fulfilment of Judaism, as Christ is the expected Messiah, and then it is something of further development, not by any means antagonistic, not abrogating the Mosaic institution but additional to it. The Jews must now become Christians, but the Gentiles, in order to be Christians, must first become Jews. There was need of Conciliar authority to determine, but the question once determined, it was not open to maintain the contrary.

<sup>3</sup> It is quite clear that the "false brethren," those who declaimed against the non-observance of the Mosaic ritual,



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first place, their business is to suggest doubt of his Apostolic credentials and office. In the second place, there came about at Corinth a division into parties and preferences. Some gave up St Paul and felt more sure by declaring themselves to be converts of Apollos. Others discarding both of their missionaries, went back to the Jerusalem Church and to St Peter, the chief Apostle, the chief of those chosen by Christ during His earthly life.<sup>1</sup> St Paul, with his large mind, with his spiritual enlightenment, foresees in such division the most grievous peril of the future Church. For Christians it must

were professing Christians, not Jews who objected as Jews. St Paul appears to have interpreted the Jerusalem rescript as detaching the Mosaic obligation from the Church in general, Jews as well as Gentiles, and this interpretation was approved by the action of St Peter immediately following at Antioch (Gal. ii. 12, 14). But it was not the general view. When St Paul arrived at Jerusalem on his final visit, he was advised to comply publicly with a particular Jewish observance, because "there are many thousands among the Jews that have believed, and they are all zealots for the Law" (Acts xxi. 20).

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, no division or dispute among the Apostles themselves. To St Peter St Paul is a "beloved brother" (2 Peter iii. 15), and the dispensing of Gentiles from observance of the Mosaic law was St Peter's own proposition (Acts xv. 7-11). Apollos was a catechumen of Aquila and Priscilla, who were themselves among St Paul's converts, and were intimately associated with him. It is St Paul's doctrine that Apollos is taught and therefore teaches. And he was with St Paul when the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xvi. 12) was written !

be "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." The Corinthians were baptised, not into Paul or Apollos, but into Christ. It is a sore that needs the knife.

St Paul's vindication of himself to the Corinthians appeals to the record of his stay in Corinth. Already in his first Epistle he had disclaimed the possession of intellectual capability as his title to be heard. Corinth is the flower of Greek culture and philosophy. He has none of that wisdom, but comes to them instead with "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor. i. 21). "You gladly suffer the foolish," he writes (2 Cor. xi. 19), "being wise yourselves." He lived in that cultivated society "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3).

And yet another wisdom, a different wisdom, he does possess. This is the wisdom of God; it is also the power of God. It is attained not by reasoning, but by revelation. "I did not"—he told the Galatians (i. 12)—"receive it from man, neither was I taught it, but I received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> As possessed of this wisdom, he is above criticism

<sup>1</sup> So his account of the Institution of the Eucharist he obtained (not from the description of any Apostle who was present, but) "from the Lord" (1 Cor. xi. 23).

and not to be contradicted or opposed. He is judged of no man. Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to set right the spiritual man? The spiritual man has the mind of Christ made known to him (1 Cor. ii. 15, 16).

The tone of the Second Epistle is divided between expressions of affection and approval

**The tenor of 2 Corinthians.** ("You are our letter of recommendation, written in our hearts, known and read of all men," iii. 2), and words of stern reproof ("I fear lest perhaps when I come, I shall not find you such as I would," xii. 20). The Corinthians have paid some regard to the rebukes addressed to them in the First Epistle and are commended for their ready submission (vii. 7-11). But there is still wickedness unrepented of (xii. 21). And they have not yet got back to the confidence they once had in St Paul. There is resistance offered to his authority. "Do we"—he asks indignantly—"need letters of recommendation to you; are we to begin again to recommend ourselves to you" (iii. 1)? If he is not to them a savour of life unto life, he is of death unto death. He dares not hide this from them, he dares not "deal deceitfully with the word of God"; he speaks to them as in the sight of God, as in Christ (ii. 16, 17).

The delusion of his calumniators is to suppose

that "he walks according to the flesh" (x. 2), that is to say, that he employs only human powers; true, he walks *in* the flesh, of an he is a human being, but he does not **Apostle.** war *after* the flesh (ver. 3). The weapons of his warfare are not "carnal" but spiritual; in our phrase, not natural but supernatural; "mighty to God" (ver. 4). His conversation, his living, in the world, and especially as he was known at Corinth, was "not in carnal wisdom but in the grace of God" (i. 12).

"The signs of an Apostle," he reminds the Corinthians, "were wrought among you in all patience, with miracles and marvels and mighty deeds" (xii. 12). We have not the particulars at Corinth, but the record of Ephesus is, "in nothing behind the very chiefest Apostles" (xii. 11); "God wrought by the hand of Paul more than common miracles; so that even there were brought from his body to the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them and the wicked spirits went out of them" (Acts xix. 11, 12). Others than he, not authorised as he, attempted miracles on those that were possessed of evil spirits. "And the man in whom the wicked spirit was, leaping upon them and mastering them both, prevailed against them, so that they fled out



of that house naked and wounded" (ver. 16.) These occurrences produced not only belief but fear (ver. 17).

When St Paul asserts that he worked miracles at Corinth, we may gather that they were such as those at Ephesus, or not of inferior evidence and awe. What was to have been done to the offender mentioned in the First Epistle? He was to be "delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. v. 4). This was to be done in the Name of Christ, with St Paul only present in spirit. An awful and mysterious sentence, which is beyond our power at this date to interpret.<sup>1</sup>

In his First Epistle St Paul proposed to come shortly to Corinth; there are some who  
**The exercise of Apostolic authority.** are puffed up, thinking he will not come; but he will come, and he will know not the speech of those who are thus puffed up but their power.

As it was between Elijah of old and the prophets of Baal (3 [1] Kings xviii. 24), "the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." Shall they

<sup>1</sup> An example, it may be said, of ecclesiastical excommunication. But the things in that supernatural time are not wholly the same as subsequently. The rite of Confirmation repeats the practice of the Apostles, who laid hands on the newly-baptised (Acts xix. 5, 6), and the Holy Ghost is given, but those confirmed do not speak with tongues and prophesy.

suffer the retribution of the sons of Scaeva (Acts xix. 14) or worse? Shall it be "with a rod" that the Apostle returns to Corinth (1 Cor. iv. 18-21)?

That is the plain issue, the plain meaning of what St Paul writes, not to be evaded or avoided, as if only our later imitative use of the words of Scripture were meant, as if there were no supernatural interposition, visible and actual, intended in the Apostolic threatening, with such established knowledge of the power he holds. The Second Epistle is no different, uses identical language.

For there is still some lingering resistance to St Paul's authority. The Corinthians are to be commended in some part but not in everything; "they are clean, but not all;" there are "many who have sinned and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness that they have committed" (xii. 21). If St Paul has not yet come to Corinth, it is on their account, because he would fain spare them (i. 23), because he hoped to visit them presently in happier circumstances, finding them as he would have them, and not himself proving to them other than they would wish him to be (xii. 20). But if not, if there is still no change to a better mind, he warns once more those who have sinned that he will not

•

spare them (xiii. 2). Do they doubt whether he is an Apostle, do they seek a proof that Christ speaks by him? They shall have it (ver. 3). His authority is given him by Christ for their edification, not for their destruction (x. 8); still it is the power of God, which is operative in their conversion and instruction (xiii. 4). No; the treasure is in earthen vessels (iv. 7); St Paul glories in his own weakness, in his sufferings, his stripes, imprisonments, privations. But why? Because it is in that weakness that he is strong; he glories in it, that the power of Christ may dwell in him (xii. 9).

Pondering the terms of the Second Epistle, it is again incontrovertibly plain to us that

**The**  
**Epistle.** St Paul writes as one conscious of the possession of supernatural powers, and conscious also that it is within the knowledge of those to whom he writes that he is so possessed. Let them respect what he writes in absence — so we might imagine the suggestion—as they have experienced what he was when present with them.

It is startling to find that the argument is in the reverse order. Not as his presence had been awe-inspiring, so let his letters be. But contrariwise, as his letters are, so will they

find his presence. His presence among them, as he calls upon them to bear him witness, had been replete with supernatural evidences, miracles and marvels and mighty deeds, and the language is not satisfied by any lesser interpretation of its meaning, as if there was no reference to the sufficiency he has of God (iii. 5), as if St Paul would convey no more than the assurance that, what he threatens by letter he will put into execution when he is arrived.

But the language has extraordinary significance. His personal intercourse having been what it was, nevertheless his writing is estimated to be superior; the letter has power, and no word of qualification is given; the personal intercourse is allowed to be weakness by comparison; "chastened, perplexed, persecuted, cast down" (iv. 8, 9), such is the Apostolic ministry. There is more than that. The superiority of the letter is expected to be manifest, to strike everyone at once, and St Paul warns those to whom he writes not to be misled by such appearance, or to allow it to affect their view.

What, then, is the letter? Is it no more than a strong remonstrance, eloquently worded, and exciting attention? Surely that will not explain the reception it obtains. As the Apostolic preaching was supernatural, as that



was "the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18), so is the writing supernatural, divinely inspired. Surely so, if the writing is to be compared with, is to be preferred before, the preaching. For it is not that St Paul threatens action in his letter which, after he arrives, he does not carry out. He has not yet arrived after any letter. The comparison is with, can only be with, the Corinthians' knowledge of him when he visited the city first, when he made converts of them. They accept the letter, they accepted the First Epistle, as equal to and more than that experience.

Yes; because the letter is not St Paul's composition, but the instruction of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of God. Are there forsooth in Corinth other prophets, other teachers spiritually endowed? If it be so, then those others will know and recognise that the things St Paul writes are not his own, but given to him. They are "the commandments of the Lord" (xiv. 37).

A final observation that may be made will have equally extensive bearing on the conditions of Divine Inspiration with the preceding annotation. The importance of these two Epistles to the Corinthians, that they are not mere ephemeral compositions, that they are sacred

**Of permanent and general instruction.**

writings of permanent and general instruction, that they are such in the estimation of St Paul himself when he wrote them, is manifest from the address they bear. They convey reproofs to the Corinthians on matters special to their own circumstances, they reply to questions of difficulty that the Corinthians have proposed (1 Cor. vii. 1, etc.), but their instruction is not confined to the Corinthians, the private affairs of Corinth must unavoidably be made public, because these Epistles are Scripture, because they belong intrinsically to the Sacred Books of the universal Church. Thus the Second Epistle is addressed to "the Church of God at Corinth together with all the saints in all Achaia." The First is given a still wider mission: "to the Church of God at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, who are called to be saints, together with all those anywhere who call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." The letters are not ordinary letters. They are exceptional, exceptionally composed, known to the writer as so being; they are letters written by inspiration.

## CHAPTER VI

### INSPIRED WRITING

AMONG "the signs of an Apostle" appears to our backward view to be pre-eminently included

**Personal domination of Apostles.** the power of working miracles, and St Paul so declares it to be. The beginning, the immediate succession of Pentecost, was the healing of the lame man by SS. Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (Acts iii.). Still more conspicuous, however, is the gift of personal domination. The sick were healed at Ephesus with handkerchiefs and aprons taken from St Paul's body. But in the very earliest days at Jerusalem people laid their sick in the streets, so as to have the shadow of St Peter fall upon them as he passed along (v. 15). The language of the narrative does not perhaps declare the shadow by itself to have healed the sick, but the action picturesquely displays the devotion to the Apostle that existed.

We must determine once for all and make up our minds. Is the miraculous record that

**Are** accompanies the beginnings of **miracles** Christianity authentic, or is it **authentic?** the embellishment of pious credulity? If the former, then certainly in all our reasoning and reflection upon the New Testament narrative, we should have this aspect of the time continually present to our minds, we should find it necessary on every occasion to allow for the presence of miracle, to make room for it, to take it into account, whether named or omitted in the narrative.

If, on the other hand, we decide for exclusion or economy of miracle, the New Testament somewhat falls to pieces, the narrative needs reconstructing by rejection and hypothesis on almost every page; at any rate in that case we put ourselves out of accord with the general belief of Christendom since the beginning; we are not, with such canon of interpretation, working upon Christian lines.

As described in the narrative, the Apostles may be said to have taken up the mantle that **Apostolic** fell from Jesus on His Ascension, **miracles.** and to have parted with it the waters after He had disappeared. And even antecedently they exercised miraculous powers by His word and appointment. On the



occasion of the election of the Twelve, Jesus presently sent them away into the surrounding country to preach the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven and gave them power to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils (Matt. x. 7, 8. Cp. Mark vi. 7, foll.). St Mark records that they actually did cast out devils and heal sick persons during that peregrination. The Seventy, on their subsequent mission, with similar authority, are related to have "returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us in Thy Name" (Luke x. 17). Here the answer of Jesus should receive particular attention: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.<sup>1</sup> Behold, I have given you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And yet, in this rejoice not, *that the spirits are subject to you*; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (vv. 19, 20).

The miracles that Jesus worked, His disciples were also to work, and even greater miracles, after He was departed (John xiv. 12). The record of the Apostles was extraordinary from Pentecost onwards. They did not only

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is no doubt primarily to the fall of the rebel angels (Apoc. xii. 9; comp. Is. xiv. 12), but it is applied to the consequent subjection of Satan to the power of the Incarnate Word.

heal the sick; their steps were attended by other manifestations that diffused astonishment and awe. At Thessalonica the accusers of St Paul declare, "Those who have turned the world upside down are come hither" (Acts xvii. 6). The Sanhedrim at Jerusalem does not ignore that supernatural events are happening and that the work may be "of God" (iv. 16; v. 39). At Lystra the pagans were prepared to offer sacrifice to SS. Paul and Barnabas as being the deities Zeus and Hermes descended to earth (xiv. 11, 12). Did Jesus raise from death Jairus' daughter (Mark v. 22, 23, 35, foll., etc.)? St Peter raises the dead Tabitha in the same manner and with the same word (Acts ix. 36, foll.).

The Apostles do not themselves call down divine vengeance upon any. That was forbidden them by Jesus (Luke ix. 54, 55). But they do prophesy retribution, which overtakes those who resist them. "The feet of those that have buried thy husband are at the door and they shall carry thee out" (Acts v. 9). "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, and not see the sun" (xiii. 11). On the first occasion of Simon Magus encountering St Peter, he was subjugated by supernatural terror: "Pray you for me to the Lord, that none of the things

you have spoken may come upon me" (viii. 24.) It is idle to imagine or pretend that such events were not absolutely strange and awe-inspiring, or that things similar belonged to the superstition of their age as from time to time occurring. There was (according to the record) no question of superstitious credulity, the things were unmistakably done, were frequent, public, notorious.

The evidence of miraculous power was promotive of the progress of Christianity with the **Evidential** rapidity that belongs to its first **value of** age. There were other induce-  
**miracles.** ments to believe — the assurance of a future life (which, however, itself rested on the miraculous Resurrection of Christ), the purity and simplicity of the doctrine, the evidence of the converted lives of those who accepted the faith. But the miracle was essential as assuring the Gospel to be of divine revelation. It was the *imprimatur* of God.

Further, the working of miracles may be considered a "note" of the Church. Jesus commissioned His Apostles to exercise tremendous spiritual powers. What they bind and loose on earth, shall be bound and loosed in heaven (Matt. xvi. 19). Whose sins they remit, He told them, are remitted, and — more terrible responsibility — whose sins they retain are

retained (John xx. 23). But also, before He ascended, He gave as "signs" of true Christian belief that, in His Name believers should "cast out devils, speak divers tongues, take up serpents or drink deadly potions without hurt, lay hands on the sick, and recover them" (Mark xvi. 17, 18). The possession of the spiritual gift is not evidenced to all by visible mark of its operation. But the miraculous power has a sensible manifestation and can be verified to exist. Accordingly the reality of the unknowable is testified by the proved actuality of the known. Jesus confers upon His Church two gifts, that of the spiritual dominion, and that of the miraculous working. When one is apparent, it disposes the spectator to believe in the other also. That it may be known that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, Jesus says to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go home" (Matt. ix. 6, etc.).<sup>1</sup> The working of miracles has never ceased within the Catholic Church.

<sup>1</sup> When the Established Protestant Church in England some years ago claimed to have the Apostolic succession and to exercise the powers of the Christian priesthood, it was really sufficient answer to inquire whether the miraculous gifts of the Apostles were also succeeded to, and to ask that examples of their exercise, or even of the claim to exercise them, might be produced during the three and a half centuries since the Reformation in England.



It appears extraordinary that the propagation of the faith, with such attestation, should not have proved yet more rapid than it is recorded to have actually been. Could the general public have knowledge of the marvels that were being exhibited—and they had knowledge—without some suspicion whether a divine intervention was not proceeding in their world? Could they see the dead raised, the living struck dead, with no disposition to believe, or at least to listen to, the doctrine?

There are several reasons that may be considered. First of all, the colossal density of the ordinary mind under prejudice, **Reasons of failure ;** an obstacle of which we have **sensible** plentiful experience in our own **obtuseness.** time. With us miracles the performance of which is not recorded in Holy Scripture, post-Apostolic miracles, are the whole of them rejected? But for what reason? Not surely on the plea of less conclusive evidence being obtainable. The New Testament miracles were performed long years ago, and their authenticity rests alone on written testimony. Subsequent miracles occur in each generation, and each generation has them to investigate and obtain personal assurance of their actuality. The celebrated Cardinal de Retz is recorded to have examined carefully and minutely for

himself the circumstances of a miracle that occurred in his own time and neighbourhood. And to have confessed himself completely satisfied with the evidence. But he retained the scepticism belonging to his prejudice equally after as before his examination. The *a priori* argument of Hume excludes not only testimony but the evidence of the senses. But what impartial judge would exclude either? I must not believe that the ordinary rule of my experience is broken, though my brother tells me of it, nor though I saw it with my own eyes!

There are other accompanying reasons why the evidence of miracles fails of its effect. One other is worthy of consideration.

Miraculous events, on the scale and with the profusion that belonged to the introduction of Christianity, may be argued to demonstrate the intervention of divine power. Also, conversely, when a Divine Revelation is made, it is hard for those who preach the new-vouchsafed Gospel, to justify their mission, unless there is something more than natural that attends their preaching. The doctrine is possibly true; but is it of divine origin? This can hardly be assured without the accompaniment of miracle. How is St Francis of Assisi to obtain audience of the Pope, or to gain consideration for his mendicant friars?

But if in December he arrives with his arms full of roses?

Miracles, the raising of the dead, the healing of sickness and infirmity in multiplied cases, may be admitted as evidence. But **Unlawful miracles.** not necessarily proving the case. It is more a matter of arresting the attention than of carrying resolved and ultimate conviction. Because the natural sequence in some sort and degree can be superseded by evil agencies as well as by good. Such at least is the philosophy of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

When Aaron before Pharaoh threw his rod on the ground and it turned into a serpent, "the magicians of Egypt," we are told, "also did in like manner with their enchantments" (Exod. vii. 11). Certainly the divine working is still superior to and goes beyond any other operation whether of good or evil agency. The magicians could not follow Moses through the series of his plagues. Similarly in the Christian time Simon, who "used sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria," was confounded by the spectacle of the miraculous gift of tongues. But this distinction, this supereminence, of what is divine, may be overlooked or combated. "He casteth out devils," it was said, "by Beelzebub" (Luke xi. 15, etc.). The devil is "God's ape,"

and in itself, without distinction of quality or kind, miracle-working is no warranty of acceptance with God.

The miracle is not more proof of Christianity than Christianity is proof of the miracle. "Try the spirits, whether they are of God. . . . Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that divides Jesus, is not of God" (1 John iv. 1-3).<sup>1</sup> The faculty of "discernment of spirits" is one of the *spiritualia* conferred by God upon those whom He chooses for its exercise (1 Cor. xii. 10), a supernatural grace not belonging to everybody.

Nor in the exhibition of supernatural powers is there only the black species of which to take account. Much more frequent is **Delusion.** fraudulent imposition and chicane—"of men corrupt in mind and devoid of truth, who conceive that piety may be made a source of income" (1 Tim. vi. 5). Among the number are those who "creep into houses and make capture of silly women that are loaded with sins and led away by capricious desires" (2 Tim. iii. 6). The notion of selling oneself to the devil in order to have supernatural powers, was current in former ages—and such a transaction

<sup>1</sup> The Vulgate version is, *omnis spiritus qui solvit Jesum, ex Deo non est*—not to be disregarded. See above, p. 78.



was even then less frequent than was supposed. In our time the devil finds it in general more effective to deceive the intelligence of such as are without spiritual guidance. He is like any three-card-trick player, who only once in twenty times actually does the sleight of hand. And the impostor sells himself none the less as really as did Dr Faustus, and those he deceives are the devil's dupes along with him. It would be uncandid, or at any rate rash, to deny that supernatural effects are ever to-day produced apart from sanctity. But in such case, without pronouncing the work to be of evil nature, we should still have nothing to assure us against its so being.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, however, whether from the doubt of their innocence or from suspicion of their genuineness, from contempt for those who pretend to perform them **Miracles passed over.** and for those who believe in the performance, the "silly women" and unmanly men, it results that supernatural exhibitions do not get any notice from the mass of the population and miracles are set on one side. Meanwhile

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, the word "telepathy" is glibly spoken, but inasmuch as the examples of its supposed operation only occasionally occur, the scientific mind requires to know what cause is present in the few instances which is absent in the many. Even wire-less telegraphy has its medium. What is the medium of telepathy?

it may be remarked that men of scientific education and eminence, display sometimes a credulity in regard to such things wholly foreign to the scientific mind. But only if the things are apart from Christianity, and then although their propagation is accompanied by every kind of religious extravagance, the "controversies of men corrupt in mind," of which St Paul wrote (1 Tim. *l.c.*) already in his time. These same men of science will not admit of the miracles of the Christian Church, will not even inquire into their existence.

Nevertheless, though under like conditions during that age, were it in Corinth or in Rome, with scepticism and the "lying wonders" of Satan (2 Thes. ii. 9), with "profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20), the first progress of Christianity was unmistakably according to the record promoted by the presence of miracle, by the transcendence and the frequency of the miracles performed. Within Christian communities, for those who were cognisant of the things that were happening, the days of an Apostle's visit passed in perpetual wonderment and spiritual exaltation.

Nor was it only Apostles that worked miracles; they as it were infected other persons within the communities with super-

natural activity. Thus the stupendous miracle of universal speech, which was made at Pentecost a sign of the coming of the Holy Ghost to empower the Apostles for their mission, this same supernatural gift was bestowed upon Cornelius and his assembled kinsfolk and friends at Caesarea (Acts x. 46), and upon those whom St Paul found to be disciples and upon whom he laid his hands at Ephesus (xix. 6). There were some in the Church at Corinth also, it would seem, who had been chosen by God to such distinction (1 Cor. xii.; xiv. 2, foll.).<sup>1</sup>

The reference to, and enumeration of, the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (chs. xii. and xiv.), apparently in response to some request for instruction, may not be throughout easy to understand, for us who are removed from the circumstances and conditions of the time of writing. What is, however, in the first

<sup>1</sup> In verse 18, "I speak with tongues more than you all," surely implies that some Corinthians had the gift. These miraculous powers are perhaps bestowed by act of an Apostle. Thus, writing to the Romans (i. 11), St Paul "desires to see them, that he may impart to them some spiritual gift" (τὴ χάρισμα πνευματικόν), the very terms that are used in 1 Cor. xii., e.g., vv. 1, 9, etc.

place clear, is that all the graces enumerated are intended to belong to supernatural endowment in St Paul's discourse. It is impossible to rationalise about them. St Paul may be held (by rationalists) to have represented natural faculties as something more august through the religiosity of his disposition and proneness to mystical interpretation; that is (it may be said) the plain account of it. But then it cannot be denied that he did intend to represent them as something more august; he is not using a merely pious metonymy in his own conception. All wisdom and utterance of knowledge is the gift of God, but St Paul does not allude to those who are endowed (in lesser measure) with the inspiration of Socrates and Plato. Nor does the gift of tongues anywhere in the Acts or in this Epistle mean a quickness in learning languages. The grace of healing is the same that was exercised by our Lord and His first disciples; it is not represented by the advance of medical science.

One of these supernatural gifts is especially appropriate to consider along with the general subject of inquiry. Prophecy, as **Prophecy.** mentioned in the Epistle, is something different from our sense of the term. But quite accordant with its use in other portions of Holy Scripture. By prophecy we mean



foretelling the future. In Scripture it is any inspired instruction, whether regarding the future or the present, moral and religious instruction for the prophet's age equally as revelation of the providence of God in the ages to come. The writings of the Hebrew prophets are more largely of the former description than of the latter.

But this explanation of what is intended, does not diminish the supernatural measure.

**Distinct from preaching, etc.** Prophecy (*προφητεία*) is not the same as preaching (*κήρυγμα*, 1 Cor. i. 21). It is speech divinely, or at any rate supernaturally, inspired.

Thus it may be distinguished from the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge (1 Cor. xii. 8, 10), but alternatively it may be taken as attended by both (xiii. 2).<sup>1</sup>

It is another kind of utterance than natural speech, and to be recognised by the hearers

**Compared with speaking with tongues.** as different from that. On the occasion of the bestowal of the Holy Ghost at Ephesus (Acts xix. 6), those on whom the spirit was bestowed "spoke with tongues

and prophesied." There is perhaps a connection between the two manifestations, there

<sup>1</sup> The "understanding of mysteries" is the same as wisdom. See ii. 6, 7.

is certainly a resemblance and a parallel. He who speaks with tongues may utter his own thoughts, but the words are not his own, are not separately and individually understood by him; he utters the articulate sounds that form themselves in his mind by interior suggestion.<sup>1</sup> In a Greek assembly the preacher speaks in Coptic (Acts ii. 10) by the gift of tongues, while some other by the gift of the interpretation of tongues translates into Greek the words he utters (1 Cor. xiv. 27). Neither of them are naturally acquainted with the Coptic language; utterance and interpretation are given by supernatural suggestion, this to one and that to the other. Similarly to prophesy is to utter words that are not the speaker's own, possibly neither are the ideas his own. The prophetic utterance cannot be confused by the hearers with natural speech. The manner of it, the appearance and mien of the prophet are different; he is the medium not the originator, transmitting not fashioning his oratory; he speaks what is "revealed" to him (ver. 30).

As regards imposture and charlatanry, which seem to suggest themselves as possibilities, it

<sup>1</sup> This appears from the corresponding grace — different from the gift of tongues and to our conception yet more astonishing — of the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. xii. 10; xiv. 5). He who speaks with tongues need not be able to interpret (xiv. 13).

may perhaps be supposed that in Corinth, within St Paul's influence and government, **Imposture**, there would be no false pretenders **how** to supernatural gifts. The episode **precluded**. of the sons of Scaeva suggests how the likelihood was removed. Also the sham prophet, if such appeared, might be distinguished without difficulty from the real. And "lying prophets" (2 Peter ii. 1; 1 John iv. 1), who are not shams, could be readily exposed. What St Paul ordains on this head is identical with the expression of St John (above, p. 116), naturally, both being Apostles and both writing under inspiration. "No man speaking (in the way of prophecy) by the Spirit of God saith, Anathema Jesus, and no man can say, Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3).

Among spiritual graces St Paul puts prophecy first in dignity.<sup>1</sup> Spiritual graces are not to **Prophecy** be neglected through misapplied **first in** humility or through indolence, but **dignity**. St Paul exhorts all to desire them, and to desire the grace of prophecy beyond other graces (xiv. 1). There is to be no forbidding anyone speaking with tongues, but "be

<sup>1</sup> The whole of the fourteenth chapter is argument to establish that prophecy is superior to the miracle of Pentecost, the sign of the gift of tongues. Charity, which is beyond both faith and hope, is "more excellent" (xii. 31) than the *spiritualia* all and every, but does not belong to them.

zealous" (ξηλοῦτε), he writes, "to prophesy" (ver. 29). Simply and without qualification, "he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues" (ver. 5). And prophesying is not knowledge or teaching, just as neither is it revelation, but distinguished from them (ver. 6); it is a spiritual, a supernatural, grace, classed along with the miraculous healing of the sick and with the exercise of supernatural powers (ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων), such manifestations, *e.g.*, as when "the Spirit of the Lord caught away" St Philip the Deacon on the road to Gaza, and "he was found at Azotus" (Acts viii. 39, 40); or when St Peter was freed from chains and conducted through iron prison doors by angelic agency (xii. 6-11). The Thessalonians are bidden (1 Thes. v. 20), "Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings."

We have, then, to conceive of an unusual composition of the picture, when Christianity

<b>Aspect of the Apostolic Age.</b>	is first exhibited upon the globe. Although the attendant marvels do not gain more than a limited publicity for the reasons already suggested (above, p. 113, foll.); although the phenomena pass unobserved by historians, by Josephus or by Tacitus, equally as did the retrocession of the sun-dial in the reign of Hezekiah (4 [2] Kings xx. 11) by Babylonian
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astronomers; although the most momentous epoch in history, since the birth of Moses for the Jewish historian, or the birth of Romulus for the Roman, had no record allowed it.

First, the Apostles worked miracles, frequent miracles, miracles of an astonishing preternatural character; they displayed a power of use, so to speak, in the concerns of the supernatural world; they created, undeterred and unchecked, with incredible speed, a spiritual Society that spread and grew. Secondly, within the various Christian communities there were existent spiritual faculties beyond the natural, and in especial the gift of tongues appeared, which was witnessed by a crowd of various nationality the first Christian Pentecost, and which was subsequently exhibited by believers other than the Apostles themselves, and not only that gift, but the complementary gift of the interpretation of tongues. It was a time, we might almost say, when the supernatural had become the natural condition within the Christian *milieu*, when it was not so much required to account for the presence of miracle as to find a reason why in any particular matter or occasion miracle should be absent.

The outcome of that time, the sole material remains of the Apostolic age for us, will be a literature of limited extent, which has attracted

the attention of mankind beyond any other through the succeeding centuries, which is

**The literature corre-  
spondent.** allowed to possess merit of exceptional degree, and which proceeds from writers of very moderate education and even of simple origin.

St Paul, and possibly St Luke, may be mentioned as contrary exceptions. But what after all is St Paul? Surely not antecedently to be esteemed the literary equal of Plato or of Seneca. A pupil of Gamaliel, but how far does that go? On the other hand St Matthew is a toll-gatherer and St Peter a fisherman of the Sea of Galilee. To praise the biographical art of St Matthew would be a literary solecism. St Peter writes Greek with awkwardness and with effort, but the perfection (*e.g.*) of 1 Peter i. 3-25 is hardly matched elsewhere in the New Testament.

Meanwhile the argument falls undoubtedly all to pieces, as represented at the beginning of the chapter, if the supernatural activities of the Acts of the Apostles are rejected or economised. But if this is not done, if the situation as depicted may remain, then it makes no difference whether the language of the New Testament in its several portions appears to be ordinary language, whether there is no hint or suggestion anywhere of a different manner of writing: we are still compelled to consider it

most improbable that the case should really be as it thus appears, that there should be spoken prophecy that is "revealed," and no such character attaching to the written word, that spiritual gifts should be manifest in lesser matters, and no recognisable mark of them be found in inspired writing.

We should take it, without hint or suggestion given, that those who received an Epistle or were permitted the perusal of Gospel or Acts, would presume the presence of supernatural gift, the presence of "the word of wisdom," and beyond that, the presence of "revelation." When St Paul speaks with tongues, there is uncertainty. Is it teaching, is it prophecy, is it revelation (1 Cor. xiv. 6)? But when he writes an Epistle, there is no uncertainty; it is revelation then, to be acknowledged as "the commandments of the Lord" (ver. 37)—that is to say, when he writes an Epistle that is intended as Scripture and so accepted by the Church.

The case stands thus. There is the ordinary manner of writing, which we all of us employ, and which St Paul employs in his ordinary correspondence. There is also another different manner of writing, exceptional and rare, in which the writer sets down words and sentences presented to his sub-consciousness, as

it would seem, independently of his own invention. Whatever then, the manner of writing

**Is inspired  
writing  
in the  
ordinary  
manner?**

by inspiration, it is surely not unnatural to imagine that it will not be the ordinary manner, especially amid the miraculous surroundings of the Apostolic time, to imagine that it would not need explaining to any Christian of that age, or indeed to anyone else then living and having knowledge of the things that were daily being done—it would not need explaining that there existed Apostolic writings that were not written in the ordinary manner, whatever else the manner might be. If the manner is thus extraordinary, the writers are conscious of its being so, and those who read have the writing presented to them as exceptional and supernatural in the manner of its composition.

For ourselves, the Holy Scriptures are inspired writings, the prophets of the Old Testament “spoke being led by the Holy Ghost” (ἀγόμενοι ὑπὸ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, 2 Peter i. 21). If Holy Scripture, as previously argued, cannot be without error, cannot be historically true and real, unless verbally inspired, if the writers are divinely assisted and guarded in the words they write and not merely in their literary design, and if at the same time we know of a



manner of writing different from the ordinary, then it is surely to the last degree probable that the Sacred Writers wrote themselves in a manner that was not the ordinary, and so writing, were aware of it, and their writings were, to their own consciousness and as presented to others, things not only of supernatural nature but of supernatural production, not to be set along with other writings of their own or other men's penning, but from the first sacred and Canonical in character.

The spiritual graces of 1 Cor. xii. do not come to an end with the generation that St Paul addressed, or at any rate not all of them. Thus the gift of tongues St Paul distinguishes from other gifts as being "for a sign" and having reference not to believers but to unbelievers (xiv. 22), and accordingly that particular gift has only seldom been reproduced in the subsequent history of the Church. But analogous to "prophecy" were the inspired writings of Saints down to modern times.

The writers were not visionaries nor of hysterical temper. They were not recluses. Others than the hermits of the desert wrote what they assert to have been revealed to them, as prophecy is revealed. Some have left account of the manner of their writing. It

is not the ordinary manner. As described by them, it appears to resemble what has been here called "abnormal" writing.<sup>1</sup> As the prophet speaks what is "revealed" to him (1 Cor. xiv. 30), so the writer "hears" the words he writes. The difference between prophecy and the written revelation, in these applications of either term, is perhaps no other except as between speaking and writing. It is an unfamiliar manner, such as mankind in general are unable to employ. It has spiritual and supernatural distinction.

Let us, then, place the things side by side. The Saint of the "dark" or of the "middle" ages is chosen by God, but not chosen for the same tremendous office and exercise of power as were the Apostles of Christ. The writing of the Saint may be allowed to be by revelation and to be inspired, but not in the same sense and with the same dignity as writings which are to be held infallible and Scripture. The later Saint receives the veneration of Christendom and is raised to the altars of the Christian Church, but is nevertheless of lesser status

<sup>1</sup> The "revelation" of the Saint has the difference in itself beyond any writing of others, as the source is supernatural. The Saint writes rather in the abnormal than in the ordinary manner, but what is written is not the same as the work of either abnormal or ordinary writers that are not Saints.

in the heavenly hierarchy than the Twelve who make the foundation of the City of God (Apoc. xxi. 19 foll.). And yet, notwithstanding this inferiority of writing and of writer, the writing of the later Saint is to be of such strange, miraculous, extraordinary production, and that of the New Testament writer no different in that respect from the writings of publicists and sinners! Some mark attaches to the one species of its being by divine direction; the other has attached to it no mark whatever! The Church accepted the Apostolic writings as the Word of God without any external mark of their being so, and the Church leaves the writings of Saints alone, writings that are certainly not ordinary writings! A monograph of St Peter of Alcantara is "heard" and the Epistle of St James is mental application!

Is that a plausible account, probable, or even possible? Is it not likely that if there are writings of Saints, which are distinguished by an abnormal manner of production, such distinction attaches to the writings which were allowed as Scripture? Are we to consider that there were supernatural graces of later times, which not only did not belong to the Apostolic age, but did not to the Apostles themselves? And although the existence of these very supernatural graces is asserted in the Apostolic age?

There is to be "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," and "prophecy" which is "revealed," and then the Epistles to the Corinthians are to be ordinary letters, which are indeed written by the Spirit of God, but which have no material sign of it!

There is no believing such an account. No; give up the later Saints of the dark and middle ages, account them charlatans or deluded men, but, if you venerate them as Saints, acknowledge the likelihood—nay, the moral certainty—that the writers of the New Testament wrote no more than they in the manner of ordinary writing. At least, the sacred writers wrote under what they were themselves conscious of not being ordinary conditions, and what they wrote was understood and accepted by the Christian community as being so produced.



## CHAPTER VII

### REFERENCES OF THE WRITERS TO THEIR INSPIRATION

IN the preceding chapters the inspiration of the New Testament writers was argued on general considerations that indirectly suggested it. Nor yet was their inspiration alone in the argument, but it was contended that the writings, whether epistle or historical narrative, would be presumed to be inspired writings by those for whom they were composed. The circumstances of the time suggested a miraculous character in any constitutive action that Apostles might take, and there were spiritual gifts bestowed upon the Church that were consonant with the employment of some method of writing beyond the natural.

Further, it was not the bare inspiration of the writers that was argued, but that they wrote words not their own, and were therefore conscious at the time they wrote of their writing being inspired, that they published it as being

that species of writing, and that from beginning to end there was no question of anything else.

Accordingly, the writings of the New Testament were not declared to be Scripture, as it were, at haphazard, the providence of God over-ruling and determining, whether all the extant writings of Apostles were so declared or a selection from among them. That was not the way it happened. Those particular writings of which the New Testament consists, were from the beginning received and put forward as the inspired writings of Apostles, those as distinguished from their other writings, and the force of Church use and authority was only to add acceptance to the claim, to make *de fide* what was always the opinion and understanding of Christendom. In fact, in the determination of the Canon, the action of the Church as final court of appeal is identical in process with her action regarding every other matter of faith; the witness of Tradition is the same ground for the canonicity of the Epistle to Philemon as for Papal Infallibility.

Yet again, the argument of the chapters was not in defence of Inspiration as it may be understood by persons of differing religious opinion, but it concerned a particular sense of the word, what is called Verbal Inspiration, the words no less than the ideas being com-

municated, the ideas not belonging to the writer, conclusively not, because their expression was not his; as the prophets "spoke being led by the Holy Ghost," or as the Holy Ghost, according to the Nicene Creed, "spoke by the prophets."

The question now is, whether besides general considerations of indirect application, there is any direct evidence, evidence of Apostles claiming to be assisted by the Holy Ghost, or asserting their writings to be divinely inspired, or in short of their making them a special literature, of their putting them forth already in their origin as the Scriptures of the Christian dispensation.

Before arguing these topics, there are some preliminary instructions to be weighed. How

**Limitations of allusion:** much may we reasonably expect to find, what degree of disappointment will be conclusive, what kind of allusion are we looking for?

**unconsciousness.** The very circumstance that the Apostles are really and actually "filled with the Holy Ghost," as the record says (Acts ii. 4), that they are not pretenders or deluded or enthusiasts, makes assertion unnecessary and even distasteful to them, if it is to be made on every occasion. If they fancied themselves inspired, if they wished to think they were, they would say it often. But not when they know it.

There is moreover a religious modesty that belongs to the pious. "When thou prayest," said our Lord, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret" (Matt. vi. 6). St Francis, when he was detected with the infant Jesus in his arm, took a solemn pledge of his host, who was witness, to say no word of it. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth; and His mother kept all these words in her heart" (Luke ii. 51).

There is also the grace of humility in its supernatural manifestation. The Saint in his more intimate association with God, with better comprehension of the lily splendours of holiness, is self-abashed; he shrinks with dismay over every veneration offered him; the graces bestowed upon him, the powers he exercises, he views without a particle of pride or self-gratulation; they are *gratiae gratis datae* and represent no merit of his above his fellows. "I chastise my body," writes St Paul, "and bring it into subjection, lest haply, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27). "Why look you upon us," said St Peter on the occasion of the first post-Pentecostal miracle (Acts iii. 12), "as if by our



own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"

Then our recognition of any assertion when assertion occurs, is impeded by a circumstance that affects the language of all literary productions, but in an especial degree the language of the New Testament. The meaning of the words alters and degrades with time. Thus there is a marvellous happiness in the phrase of the "Authorised" Version (1 Cor. *l.c.*), "I browbeat (*ὕπωπιάξω*) my body," and at the date of the version it no doubt gave the sense. To-day the English word has only a metaphorical employment, and to browbeat the body would mean no more than to treat it with contumely, as a lawyer "browbeats" a hostile witness.

Beyond this, Scriptural phrases and allusions have entered into colloquial expression in an oratorical and allusive application, as being familiar and readily recognisable. A political secession forms "a cave of Adullam," anyone who has special access to some high personage is "notus pontifici," any liar is an Ananias, etc. The practice has become more frequent since the Reformation. Protestants are, or were, constant readers of the Scriptures, and they read them in a naive fashion, having little

guidance and allowing themselves their own ideas. They applied the description of powers possessed and graces bestowed to their individual cases 1500 years after. The militant Puritans sought their models and their encouragements even amid the bloody scenes of the conquest of Palestine by Joshua. At Dunbar Cromwell's Ironsides marched to the attack with the Psalm: "Exsurgat Deus."

But, with this disposition to Biblicise themselves, Protestants could hardly escape making the phrases of Holy Scripture express a more moderate endowment. The Quakers applied to their ordinary religious assemblies the description of prophecy in 1 Cor. xiv., and weekly they sat together in silence till "the Spirit moved" some one of the congregation to speak. And the doctrine of pious Protestants down to our own time (only that there are fewer pious) is that the truth is "revealed" to each believer; that divine mysteries may be left him to discover for himself, because he is guided by the Spirit. It is inevitable, in this use of the expressions, that "revelation" and "the gift of the Spirit" should be less tangibly miraculous than they appear as the terms are used in the New Testament.

The degradation may be well illustrated in another word. "Unction," anointing, is a

perfectly definite thing as the word is first used. Religious consecrations had oil as their visible medium (see Luke iv. 18, etc.) and the unction of believers intends their anointing on occasion of their receiving the Holy Ghost (1 John ii. 20; 2 Cor. i. 21). But modern speech is different. A preacher shows "unction" in his sermon, and it merely means that he is fervent and impressive in manner.

Finally, the miraculous accompaniments of the preaching of the Apostles and of their presence in every place, the common knowledge that obtained where they went of extraordinary spiritual gifts belonging to them, if, that is to say, we accept the account given us in the Acts—this existing character of their overcharge in general, as has been already observed, rendered unnecessary any particular explanation or description. Their rescripts, their narratives, anything issued with their authority, carried with it the presumption of a supernatural style. Supposing the writings so produced, declared such by their titular authors, it was not necessary to mention the fact in the writings themselves, the topic did not suggest itself as one that should be urged. The writings were for instruction or for admonition; their inspiration was not in question; that particular matter was understood,

and the Christian communities went astray and were at variance on other matters, not on that.

Thus there is nothing perhaps to be discovered in the Epistles beyond incidental allusion, there is no formal pronouncement; all that we can expect would be *obiter dicta*, when another argument is being handled that may touch on this of the character of the writings—when, *e.g.*, St Paul writes his opinion on a matter submitted to him, and adds: "I think that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. vii. 40).

On the Day of Pentecost following our Lord's Ascension the Apostles were "filled with the Holy Ghost." That inspiration

**The Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.** was not exhausted in the miraculous manifestation of the Feast, but was a permanent endowment. Our Lord had told them that the Holy Ghost should be their Teacher in His place (John xiv. 26); when they were brought before governors and kings, they were not to be troubled about what they should say, but to speak what is "given" them; "for it is not you who speak but the Holy Ghost" (Mark xiii. 11, etc.). During the earthly ministry of Jesus they are represented by all four Evangelists as having been slow in understanding,<sup>1</sup> but after that

<sup>1</sup> It need not be made too much of. The teaching of our Lord is from heaven and not seldom opposed to the



Pentecost they were different. When SS. Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrim, they astonished their judges by the confidence and ability of their defence, being "unlearned and ignorant men," and the conclave "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" (Acts iv. 13).

The Apostles believed themselves to be controlled by the Holy Ghost and were conscious of being controlled. It was not as all Christians are born again of the Spirit in Baptism, or as the Holy Ghost was given to others by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, given with the Pentecostal sign. The Apostles were given the Holy Ghost not only as Christians, not only as Christian priests, but as Apostles. They were "baptised with the Holy Ghost and fire" (Matt. iii. 11). "It sat upon each of them, cloven tongues as of fire" (Acts ii. 3). That they might be evangelists, witnesses, Apostles. The word of the Ascension was: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses" (i. 8). St Peter in his second appearance before the Sanhedrim (v. 32)

natural reasonings of our minds, as, *e.g.*, in the Beatitudes. The seed that is sown by the wayside or on stony ground, however graphic and unforgettable when the parable is understood, still needs explanation.

declares this work to have come to pass: "We are witnesses and the Holy Ghost is witness whom God has given to His servants."<sup>1</sup>

The Apostles refer their actions to the Divine Inspiration that is present with them. When

**Apostolic  
action and  
speech  
inspired.** St Peter was sent for by Cornelius, "the Spirit bade him" go with the messengers (x. 19, 20; xi. 12); when St Barnabas was sent to

Cyprus, he was "full of the Holy Ghost" (xi. 24); when St Paul at Paphos struck Elymas with blindness, he was "filled with the Holy Ghost" (xiii. 9); St Stephen at his martyrdom, when heaven was open to his view, was "full of the Holy Ghost" (vii. 55). These expressions are not phrases; they represent a privileged supernatural condition of which the human subject is conscious; as with the Benedictus of St Zachary (Luke i. 67) and the Nunc Dimittis of St Simeon (ii. 25); as with the prophets of the Old Covenant (Ezech. xi. 5; 3 [1] Kings xxii. 24; Matt. xxii. 43, etc.); St John when he wrote his Apocalypse, "was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Apoc. i. 10).

<sup>1</sup> τοῖς πειθαρχουσιν αὐτῷ. A periphrasis of humility to mean the Apostles themselves. It is not "*all* that obey Him" in the Greek text. The Vulgate has "*omnibus obedientibus sibi*," if we could infer a *πᾶσι* in the Greek; but it is more probably a misunderstanding of the *textus receptus*.

The edict of the Jerusalem Council (Acts xv. 28) was promulgated in words of awe: "It

**At the** hath seemed good to the Holy  
**Jerusalem** Ghost and to us." The edict so  
**Council.** drawn was conveyed by specially deputed persons to Antioch (where the matter in dispute had arisen), and thence by SS. Paul and Barnabas disseminated among the Gentile churches. The Apostles declare that besides working miracles they speak by Divine Inspiration, and this is definitely said and professed in a despatch that the Greeks of Asia and of Europe might read. If the edict is so presented — as drawn by other than human authority—why should not any Epistle have a similar character when sent? Why should it not be understood that what St Paul ordains about marriage or about eating what is offered to idols has similarly "seemed good to the Holy Ghost?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that Judas and Silas, who convey the edict to Antioch, are recorded to have been "prophets also themselves" (ver. 32)—no doubt in the sense of prophecy that was distinguished in the former chapter here. If they are "prophets *also*," it may apparently be intended that the edict is prophecy or of kindred nature. All general Councils of the Church use similar language—it may be said—concerning their decisions. But the first occasion will not be the same, at any rate for those who receive the instruction. What has "seemed good to the Holy Ghost," must be extraordinary for human speech to declare.

Another corollary is to be contemplated. In later times it has been judged that the decisions of Councils are indefectible and under divine providence, allowing that the presence of the supreme Pontiff is obtained and his sentence is in agreement ; the Apostolic character surviving with the Pope alone of Bishops. But in the Jerusalem Council many Apostles are present, each of whom has the Divine Assistance ("The Spirit of truth, when He is come, will guide you into all truth," John xvi. 13). What is declared to have "seemed good to the Holy Ghost," is what was proposed to the assembly by SS. Peter and James. Here, then, is an instance of Apostles (who draw up the edict) themselves declaring their speech to be by Divine Inspiration. The conclusion cannot be avoided. Unless the phrase is considered to be no more than conciliar style. But to make it so would be an anachronism.

St Paul describes himself, or is described by his companion in travel and intimate associate,

In to have been directed in his missionary progress by the Holy Ghost. He went up to Jerusalem (it would seem on the occasion of the Council) "by revelation" (Gal. ii. 2) ; when he crossed the sea again from Antioch with Silas, he was "forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the



word in Asia" (Acts xvi. 6); on his last journey to Jerusalem "the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city that bonds and afflictions await him" (xx. 23). It is immaterial whether in this last quotation the meaning is that warnings are addressed to him by others, as by Agabus at Caesarea (xxi. 11), or that the divine presage comes direct to himself, as when in the shipwreck of his voyage to Rome an angel of God reveals to him that no lives will be lost (xxvii. 23, 24). Under either interpretation the same condition is expressed of the divine direction attending his steps, and this not left for faith to credit, but being sensibly signified.

We acquire, then, the conception of the Apostles being directed in their acts and even in their speech by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This conception is gathered from incidental allusions and has no formal and general statement of it anywhere made. Unless the account of the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost may be taken without further explanation, as it no doubt should be taken, to be such general and sufficient declaration in the forefront of the history. The Apostles have the communion of the Holy Ghost—and some others besides them are recorded to have it for their case (Acts vii. 55; viii. 39; xi. 24)—in a sense in which it does not belong to the

ordinary sanctification of those who are baptised and have had hands laid upon them.

This being so, and the further conception having thereby become likely and reasonable,

**Apostolic writing inspired.** can we find that the Apostles speak of what they write, and not only of what they say, as being given to them by inspiration? Again, according to what has been sketched of the situation, we can expect no more than incidental allusion. The Apostles omit to state that their writings are inspired for the very reason that they are inspired writings. Anyone who writes a history does not begin by asserting it to be a historical work. Nor does a poet make his first quatrain into an assurance that the whole is poetry.

Here, in searching for allusions to the inspiration of the writings of the New Testament **Obstructive** within the writings themselves, **preconception.** more than in anything else, perverted and ingrained preconception, equally as the degradation of words in use, becomes obstructive.

The significance is inadequately allowed of St Peter (2 Peter iii. 16) classing the Epistles of St Paul with "the other Scriptures," and that when the same St Paul has written (2 Tim. iii. 16) that "all Scripture is by inspiration

of God." It is absurdly imagined that the two Apostles are theologically at variance, that they belong, in our phrase, to different "schools of thought," and that therefore St Peter is unlikely to assign such tremendous characters to the work of his "beloved brother."

The Thessalonians are exhorted by St Paul to "stand fast and hold the traditions which they have been taught whether by word or by Epistle," *i.e.*, by his preaching and writing alike (2 Thes. ii. 14). In his preaching they received what he spoke "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thes. ii. 13). They accepted the Gospel as being a divine revelation, and this revelation as being infallibly conveyed to them by divine assistance in his exposition of it. But "the word of God" has in later use become a synonym of the Gospel, so that, in spite of the very definite language of the passage, and in spite of the meaning that would naturally be conveyed by the expression to Gentile converts, the allusion of St Paul's words is altogether missed. "You received," he writes, "the word of God, which you heard of us" (cp. 1 Thes. ii. 13). This is not merely that they received the Gospel, but they received it—he explains—as a revelation, which was conveyed to them, without ceasing to be a revelation, when they

heard it from him. And as it was when he taught it orally, so it is when he writes it in his Epistle—"whether by word or by our Epistle."

There are expressions of St Paul's that may give a clearer sense and one more on the surface. He writes to the Romans, "the lords of the world" (*terrarum dominos*), with solemnity: "I say through the grace that is given to me (*τῆς δοθείσης μοι*), to everyone among you, not to have proud thoughts" (Rom. xii. 3). When and in what is this grace given? When he is called to be an Apostle? But at least it abides with him to say these words. He says them as an Apostle, and as giving his Apostolic message. Or does not the gift of grace refer directly to his writing, to the time then? Grace given him to write what he does write? And his writing therewith by divine instruction? But either application is overlooked, because in religious language "grace" is made a very general term. It commonly expresses that divine provision without which none can attain salvation. Every good action is done by grace. It is forgotten that the term has also a special reference, to the graces (*χαρίσματα*), ministrations, activities, of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 4), the supernatural endowment of Apostle or prophet or evangelist (Eph. iv. 11). This grace



is present in St Paul's saying. He says it as Apostle and prophet.

Or let anyone consider the argument of 1 Cor. ii. St Paul had contrasted the "foolishness" of the preaching of the **The occult wisdom of God.** Gospel, foolishness to the Greek mind, with the wisdom of intellectual culture, in which the Greek excelled. But that foolishness was wiser than any natural wisdom, because it was of God, a divine wisdom. He proceeds. This wisdom of God, this wisdom that is only for the initiated (*τοῖς τελείοις*), that is in mystery (*ἐν μυστηρίῳ*) and occult (*ἀποκεκρυμμένην*), God has revealed to the Apostles by His Spirit (ii. 10). They have received the Spirit of God, so as to know the things of God, which are freely revealed to them. But that is not all. And the context must really not be evaded by the student of St Paul. The things of God thus revealed to His Apostles, are spoken by them to others. Therewith the words in which the Apostles speak them, are not those suggested by natural intelligence. The words are given them by the Holy Ghost. "We speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (ver. 13). Not only the ideas, but the words in which they are expressed. Or else, if St Paul means "ideas," why does

he write "words"?<sup>1</sup> He claims that Christ "speaks in" him (2 Cor. xiii. 3).

It is difficult to understand how this argument of St Paul's can fail to convey its meaning, and how the meaning can be anything else than that the Apostles in their preaching are verbally inspired. The probable explanation is that in a Protestant age the pronoun of ver. 10—"God has revealed to *us* by His Spirit"—is interpreted of Christians in general. But that is exegetically impossible as the sentence occurs. St Paul contrasts "we" and "you" in the chapters as differing in office and in endowment. It is "we," the Apostles, who speak, and "you" who are spoken to. The very gravamen of the remonstrance is that among the Corinthian Christians were those who, without the wisdom of God's revelation, were creating a sectarian Christianity—"I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas." Whereas the heavenly wisdom that St Paul preached was that the Church is one (i. 13).

But there again the argument of the Epistle does not stop. It has more to declare. It is

<sup>1</sup> The conclusion of the sentence, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες, is not altogether clear. In the following sentence "the things of the Spirit of God are judged (ἀνακρίνεται) spiritually," May it be "judging spiritual things for *spiritual men*," the natural man (ψυχικός) being unable to receive them?

continued further in the Second Epistle. But still quite incidentally. If in preaching the Gospel, the words of St Paul are those which the Holy Ghost gives him to speak (1 Cor. ii. 13), then he declares in the Second Epistle that between his speech and his letters no distinction is to be drawn. They, the Corinthians, considered his letters to be weighty and powerful, but his speech contemptible (2 Cor. x. 10). If it were so, and if in his speech the words uttered are by the Holy Ghost, *a fortiori* must the "powerful" words of his letters be so conveyed to him. In writing his Epistle he is not only inspired, but inspired as to the words he uses, he is verbally inspired. Quite plainly already in his First Epistle (xiv. 37) he had said, "the things I write to you are as commanded by the Lord" (τοῦ κυρίου ἐντολαί), and (xi. 23) "I received from the Lord what I delivered to you."

The Gospels, as biography, are written impersonally. There is hardly opportunity for  
**The case of the Gospels.** the writers to refer to their part in the production, and there is no opportunity at all for personal explanation or for personal appeal. The Gospels stand or fall by the veracity of the narrative as judged by others than the writers, who are contemporaries and cognisant of the facts. It

is not for the narrator to claim belief in his statements on the ground of his writing by supernatural aid, but, on the contrary, it is his freedom from error that testifies to sources of information, or at least to powers of discrimination, beyond the natural. That is the position of the Gospels for their own time, and therefore their position as originally published; they are written with foresight of that reception. Only for ourselves at this distance of time is it relevant to appeal to the authority of the writers as ground of our belief in what they write. And only by ourselves, who live so many centuries after, is the accuracy of the narrative arraigned!

The remarks apply conspicuously to the Gospels of SS. Matthew and Mark, which were published at a very early period, or which at any rate are written with critical unconsciousness. St Luke wrote later, when "many" others had written, obtaining their information from original disciples of our Lord. St Luke accordingly prefixes to his narrative a brief personal reference. But he says nothing of his manner of writing, except for professing to be accurately conversant with all the facts from the first *παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *παρηκολουθηκότι* is ambiguous. Does it mean that St Luke had been an original disciple, suppose one of the Seventy?



The sentence hardly seems to express the supernatural information—for it could not be natural—that he had of the events of the Nativity and its eve (see above, Ch. II.).

St John's Gospel is a later account. The writer corrects misapprehensions (xviii. 13, etc.), adds explanation of what is not clear (xii. 6, 33, etc.), and supplies names and details that the other Evangelists have omitted (xviii. 10, 26, etc.). Possibly in connection with this particular feature of his work, as if emphasising that his version, where in appearance emendatory, is always the true version, that his particulars, though now first given, are perfectly accurate, he has at the end a very remarkable sentence. After giving the words of Jesus on the shore of the lake of Galilee after He was risen, what He said about "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the narrator proceeds: "This is the disciple who testifies about these things and who wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true" (John xxi. 24). Here unmistakably another personality besides that of the writer appears on the page.

Or only that he had carefully investigated the circumstances and been informed by others about them? If "from the first" (*ἀνωθεν*) distinguishes his fuller account of the Nativity, the latter hypothesis must be the explanation as to that.

The expression does not stand alone in St John's Gospel. Similarly in an earlier chapter, where St John describes the piercing of the side of Jesus, and adds that thereupon blood and water flowed from His side, a particular which the narrator evidently views as of transcendent importance (as it certainly is; cp. 1 John v. 6), and which had been omitted by the Synoptics, we have (xix. 35), *καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκε, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, καὶ ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγει*, which is in French, "et celui qui en était spectateur l'a témoigné, et son témoignage est vrai, et celui-là (*καὶ ἐκεῖνος*) sait qu'il a dit la vérité." We have not the distinction of the pronoun so well in English.

The *celui-là* is witness and he is penning the account; he says (*λέγει*) what is said in the chapter, just as in the other passage (in ch. xxi.) he testifies and wrote (*μαρτυρῶν καὶ γράψας*). But he is not the author, the narrator; the pronoun distinguishes him as another person.<sup>1</sup> He says true in setting down what is given him to write, and further, having been himself present on the occasion (ver. 26),

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators would have the pronoun merely distinguish that the witness of the piercing was not the Evangelist. But the style of the Gospel is especially to give names, except the writer's. The unnamed is the writer everywhere (cp. i. 35, 41; xiii. 23; and contr. vi. 8; xiv. 5, 8, 22).

he is able to *corroborate* the truth of it. The two passages should be compared in their clausal connection. In chapter xxi. "this is the disciple who testified and who wrote": in chapter xix. "he who has seen has testified." In the one place it is added, "we know that his testimony is true"; in the other, simply, "his testimony is true" (that first said, and then, additionally and independently, "he knows that it is true"). The parallelism is surely beyond evasion, the one sentence related and applying as the other, so that any interpretation found for either must be available equally for both.

Similarly also in 3 John 12:<sup>1</sup> "We bear record and you (who read) know that our record is true." Demetrius is said to have a good report from everybody "and from the truth itself." Then, as showing it to be so, "we, the authors of the Epistle, bear record," and there can be no question about our record being true.

<sup>1</sup> The style recurring also in the Epistle, disposes of any suggestion that in ch. xxi. of the Gospel it might be some other persons (those who added the last chapter?) who endorse the account of the Evangelist as his editors. For the phrase is seen to belong to the manner of the Evangelist and to be his phrase. Besides, if editorial, the text becomes utterly incoherent. The verse designates the writer of the Gospel without distinction of the current chapter, and it is followed by a final verse that has "I" and not "we"—"I suppose that even the world itself," etc.

St John would not write that, if it was his own opinion he was giving. The Truth Itself!<sup>1</sup>

The allusion is incidental and *currente calamo*. But God, in the definitional language of the Vatican Council and of the Council of Florence before it (see below, pp. 212, 225), is "the Author of Scripture," and, if so, then of this Epistle by St John equally as of his Gospel. And in the three passages here successively adduced from the writings of St John, we obtain the express implication of one of the New Testament writers that what he writes is not his own but has a divine authorship.

The Apocalypse undoubtedly in its style and title professes to be a revelation. St John

**The case of the Apocalypse.** definitely asserts in this book that he has had it all revealed to him supernaturally. But we must distinguish between beholding the vision and writing an account of it. We cannot suppose that St John keeps writing down on his tablets as he is conducted by the angel over the scenes

<sup>1</sup> The plural "we" is again (see preceding note) sharply distinguished from the singular "I" of the concluding sentences: "I had many things to write" (ver. 13); "I hope shortly to see thee" (ver. 14). The word "truth" is dominant in the Epistle, but it is divine truth, as universally in St John's writings. "The Truth Itself" can only be God. "In this we know that we are *of the truth*, and shall persuade our hearts before *Him*" (1 John iii. 19 : cp. John xiv. 6).



of the future Judgment or comes into view of the Great White Throne. Or even suppose that there is no more than a single vision, or that the entire account is written at a single sitting. The only way in which the vision and the account of it could be synchronous or in which they could be at all the same thing, is if the vision is literary setting and nothing of actual occurrence. That is inadmissible. If it were not, the solemnity, the wealth of detail, the strangeness, not to say monstrosity of the pictures, would make it so. St John believes himself to have actually had the vision and intends to mean that he has actually had it.

It is then, easy to find St John writing of his vision as a supernatural revelation. But does he write of the words in which he relates it being supernaturally given to him? It is not enough that he is commanded: "Write the things which thou hast seen." Does he do it by his own intelligence, or is he verbally inspired? He has certainly occasional sentences given him, as when he is bidden, "Write, Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (xix. 9. Cp. xiv. 13; xxi. 5). The declaration follows, "These words are true words of God," a declaration of awe, in which the plural number may seem to extend

the reference beyond the words immediately preceding.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion, however, of the Apocalypse is: "I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you (My people) in the Churches" (xxi. 16). And later on: "I (Jesus) testify to everyone who hears the words of this book that . . . if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his portion from the book of life" (vv. 18, 19). The words appear of too great sanctity and consequence to be the words of the human medium of communication. St John does not assign such tremendous penalty to the excision of words that are his own; he knows them not to be his own, he is conscious of their being given him, of their being "true words of God."

The passages adduced from Epistles, from Gospels, and lastly from the Apocalypse, may be otherwise understood than as here proposed, or at any rate they are not perhaps conceived to have any such definite and precise application. The passages are not adduced as establishing that the writings of the New Testament are created by divine and verbal inspiration. They are not

<sup>1</sup> In John iv. 50 a single sentence is a "word" (λόγος), not words (λόγοι). Cp. vi. 60, vii. 40, etc.

adduced aggressively, to establish any doctrine, but rather defensively, to answer the objection that, if the writings are so inspired, there is no word in the New Testament to say they are : that if the writers wrote words given to them and not of their own fashioning, they say no word of that.

But the supernatural character of the New Testament—besides the consideration of its being so ruled by early tradition and by the concurrence of Christendom ever since—the supernatural character was rendered probable, our minds were disposed to accept it, we should anticipate its belonging to the writings, though no intimation of it was given us, because the entire surroundings of the Apostolic foundation of Christianity are miraculous, because there are recorded to be supernatural gifts and “revelations” within the Church, and therefore *a fortiori* in possession of the Apostles, and finally because the Epistles frequently bear in their introduction a general address and are given no ephemeral or local currency, going beyond the immediate occasion and being instructions in doctrine and discipline for the Church at large.<sup>1</sup> They belong to the general

<sup>1</sup> There is some similarity when those Papal decisions which affect the entire Church are given a distinction above others.

scheme and partake of the character of the Apostolic work as a whole.

The historical portions of the New Testament are no different in these respects ; they are produced for Christian instruction and have a large design. St Matthew begins his Gospel with an account of the conception of Jesus by the Holy Ghost "now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying, Behold the Virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. i. 22, 23). St John begins with the eternal generation of the Word of God (John i. 1-5)!

When, then, anyone comes to the reading of the New Testament with the conception of its being a supernatural work, he finds allusions to an extraordinary, a supernatural, a divinely ordered, manner of production. If he does not find them, or does not see them to be precise and definite when pointed out to him, it is because he did not come to the reading with any clear conception of the books of Holy Scripture being inspired or with any resolved understanding of what inspiration would be, whether more than the providence of God assisting the writers and guarding them against error, and then not against all error, but against



error of any real importance. The passages that have been adduced are not all the passages or allusions that may be found. But sufficient to answer the objection against which their discovery was made. Something more may be incidentally obtained from the succeeding Chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DIFFICULTIES AND DISPUTINGS

WRITING by inspiration is not in these pages identified with abnormal writing. That is entirely out of the question. Not even the Saints of the "dark" and "middle" ages, who professed to "hear" what they wrote, ever any one of them dreamed of putting their productions in the same category with the writings of St Peter and of St Paul, with Holy Scripture.

**The reference to abnormal writing.**

Only neither in these pages is writing by inspiration identified with ordinary writing. The advantage of having abnormal writing present to our minds, the object of bringing it to the knowledge of those unaware of it, is that we may have another writing to consider, and thus be set free from the obsession of ordinary writing as the one and only; if we have two kinds within our knowledge, we have freer scope in considering what writing by inspiration may be; we need not then think of it in terms of ordinary writing; it has not to be distinguished

from that, because it may be entirely clear of it, as the abnormal writing is clear.

If it is not argued that writing by inspiration and abnormal writing are the same, neither is it that the method of the one at all resembles the method of the other. But, comparing the abnormal method, we free ourselves from the entanglement of our ordinary notions, and are enabled at once to set aside objections and difficulties that belong to the comparison of ordinary writing, when there is nothing else to be compared. The gain is differential. Specifically we no more know what writing by inspiration would be like than we know what a space of four dimensions would be like. But with the latter we exclude a number of the conditions that hold in our ordinary world, and so must we with the former set aside many accompaniments of our ordinary method.

There still remains a principal ground of hesitation with our contraveners. It may be granted us that the Epistolary writers appear in a few places, as discovered in the preceding chapter, to speak of their writings as inspired, and even sometimes possibly of the words they write being given them. It is a big superstructure to raise on such slight suggestion, when we would have

**Objection  
of the  
simplicity  
of the New  
Testament  
writings.**

the whole of the New Testament to be inspired not only as to the sense but as to the words employed. But let that also be granted as a reasonable deduction.

It is objected that deduction and suggestion give way before the evidence of facts. The facts are against us. The best rebutting evidence is to be found in the writings of the New Testament themselves. The Epistles, however profound the teaching they embody, are written in a natural epistolary style; referring to small matters as well as great—"the cloak I left at Troas with Carpus bring with thee, and the books, especially the parchments" (2 Tim. iv. 13); replying to the incidental inquiries of correspondents—"concerning the things whereof you wrote to me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor. vii. 1). The distinguishing note of the Gospels, at least of the Synoptics, is their simple and unaffected way of telling their story. What St Paul writes portrays himself, and something of St Luke appears in his narrative. "The style is the man." Equally, if the Fourth Gospel is different from the others, that too is "the Johannine style."

Such argument appears very evident and indisputable. Hesitancy in declaring the New Testament to be literally the Word of God,



hesitancy in defining nettly what Inspiration is, hangs very generally, consciously or unconsciously, on the sense of this very natural appearance of the writings. What is so simple, it is thought, cannot be supernatural. "Behold, I said with myself, he will surely come out to me and stand and call on the Name of the Lord his God and strike his hand over the place" (4 [2] Kings v. 11).

But, first of all, we should not accept the account here given of our own contentions.

**Reply.** The allusions of Epistolary writers, against which the facts are arrayed, do not constitute the evidence we relied upon. The Divine Inspiration of the New Testament is declared by the Church and is from all time the belief of Christendom. The belief is supported by the general miraculous character of the early years of Christianity, which makes it most improbable that the writings of the Apostles, formally conceived and executed for the edification of the Church, should have no supernatural quality attaching to them. There are supernatural gifts of proximate description existing in the Church; in "prophecy" the words are "revealed" to the speaker, and if it is feasible to hear and speak words, why not also to hear and write them? That was our general position.

The reply to the particular objection is that Inspiration does not change the style of the writer. What is given him to write **In inspired writing the style remains.** must be in one style or another, and why should it not be in his own style, why should it be in any other style? The Apostles are recorded to have had the gift of tongues, and may have been able to write, as to speak, in any language that had an alphabet with which they were familiar, and if the consonants and vowels were not very differently sounded from their expectation. They write in Greek or in Hebrew,<sup>1</sup> the language which comes most naturally and easily to them and is the language of those for whom they write. It would not be expected that they should write by inspiration in the Coptic script. Neither is it that they should write in the style of Plato or of Thucydides.

Simplicity makes no dissonance. The marvel of life, the acorn that contains the oak of a hundred years' expansion; the marvel of articulate speech, how the human animal first achieved it—these are simple seeming things. The works of God are simple. Even miracle in the providence of God is but seldom for display.

<sup>1</sup> The Gospel of St Matthew is traditionally said to have been written in Hebrew, and what we have to be only a translation.

A second difficulty with regard to Inspiration, though this is found more in the Old Testament than in the New, is connected with the use of documents. The **Objection of the incorporation of documents.** historians of the Jewish kings surely had recourse to public and private memorials as much as did Livy or Polybius. Reference is continually given to "the chronicles of the kings" of Judah or of Israel (3 [1] Kings xiv. 29; xv. 31, etc.). In 2 Paralip. [Chron.] ix. 29, no less than three sources are named for the reign of Solomon — the book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, the visions of Iddo the seer. The whole of the reign of Uzziah is said to have been written by the prophet Isaiah (2 Paralip. [Chron.] xxvi. 22). In Isaiah xxxvi., xxxvii., we have two chapters bodily transferred into the history of the Kings (4 [2] Kings xviii., xix.), or thence into the prophecy. In the same way Jeremiah xxxix. seems to be the last chapters of the last book of the Kings with little difference. Still earlier, and in what is not perhaps a purely historical reference, we are referred to "the book of Jasher" (Josh. x. 13) as authority for the miracle of Joshua.

Coming to the New Testament, one would imagine that those who proposed to themselves

to write an account of the ministry of our Lord, would collect information from all who could furnish particulars and who were within their reach. St Luke (i. 2) **In the New Testament.** speaks of Evangelists who make up their narratives out of what eye-witnesses and disciples have described to them. His account of his own work, as already noticed (above, p. 152, note) is not very clear, whether he writes as a disciple or as having heard from others. But St Mark at any rate, the nephew of St Barnabas (Col. iv. 10), had never seen our Lord. His information is said by early writers to have been obtained from St Peter, and it is in reality St Peter's Gospel that he writes.<sup>1</sup>

There is a distinction no doubt to be drawn between information orally conveyed and the incorporation of written matter, between interrogating those acquainted with the facts and extracting or transcribing from existing records. In the one case there is something of the author's mind, in the other there is nothing at all. For let the author of the Book of the Kings be divinely inspired. Is the writer of the chronicles or other documents from which

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39, etc., entitles St Mark "the interpreter of Peter" (ἐρμηνευτῆς Πέτρου), quoting Papias, who again rests on the testimony of John the presbyter. Eusebius in other places refers to the authority of St Clement and St Irenaeus.



he borrows inspired likewise? If not, the completed work is not a work of inspiration from end to end. There will be portions that belong to unassisted human intelligence.

The Gospel of St Mark is all written by St Mark, and so by an inspired writer, if he is inspired. There is (suppose) nothing in it of transcription. But the difference does not amount to much. The responsibility for the facts of the narrative rests with St Peter. If the narrative is to be Scripture and the truth of it divinely assured, the inspiration would seem to be required for the informant rather than for the compiler. Or for both. So that the facts may neither be erroneously given nor misleadingly presented.

But if the incidents of the Gospel may be obtained from others, when they are beyond the writer's own knowledge or recollection, there are things recorded which neither could the writer know nor could anyone inform him of them, while to invent them would be the utmost impiety. As for example, the dialogue of the Annunciation, or that of the Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. It is impossible that St Mary Magdalen should have told the story of her seeing Jesus in the Garden of the Sepulchre after He was risen. She would have said that

**Occasional  
inspiration.**

she had seen Him, she would have given His message (John xx. 18), but not a word more.

Very well, then. Let the Evangelists be inspired and so able to narrate what would be otherwise impossible, but, excepting for such matters, they go on with their writing like anyone else, only being protected against serious error by the divine appointment. It is not an unlikely account of their work, and would no doubt satisfy the belief of many sincere and pious people.

But if the inspiration is then verbal, if what he writes is on such occasion given to the Evangelist in the words in which he is to write it, as in the above instances, the words of the angel Gabriel or of Satan, or the *Noli me tangere* of St Mary Magdalen's vision—and there would be a considerable number of such interventions in the Gospel narratives as we have them—then it would seem that discrimination would be difficult for the writer between the times when he is receiving the words given him and the times when he is choosing words for himself; his inspiration goes on for some minutes and stops; after some minutes more it is begun again; it would surely be most difficult. The meaning then also of the declaration of the Church and of Holy Scripture itself, that the sacred writings were by the inspiration

of God, would be no more than that they contained passages that were inspired. It would not seem fully to satisfy the declaration.

The real, and after all rather simple, solution is that an inspired writer is inspired *in the use*

**Reply.** *he makes* of documents. He omits

or corrects, he selects the portions of which he makes use, under the guidance of his inspiration. The Jewish archives are not devoid of error, but they become so to the extent to which they are accepted and used by the inspired historian. St Peter is an inspired writer in his Epistles, but in regard to the Gospel of St Mark the inspiration is with the Evangelist.<sup>1</sup> And St Peter's recollections, orally given, are on the same footing as written matter, to be dealt with as the control over the Evangelist directs.<sup>2</sup> There is no difficulty in bringing the use of documents into the account of inspiration that is being expressed.

But, it may be objected, why should an inspired writer have recourse to documents, why should he collect information in any way,

<sup>1</sup> Unless the Gospel bears the name of St Mark only as scribe. But that would perhaps have some clearer expression in antiquity than ἐμνηνεύτης Πέτρου.

<sup>2</sup> In abnormal writing, documents are copied without the intelligence of the writer, in this sense, that he does not choose for himself the portions he selects but follows the suggestion of his sub-consciousness.

when, after all is done, what he writes will have nothing to do with himself, but be given to him *in toto*, already phrased and worded? The case, however, is the same as what has been explained of language and style. The inspired writer does not write in a language wholly unknown to him, nor in a style foreign to himself; he does not write Coptic, nor, when writing Greek, is it the Greek of Plato.

Just so he writes on a subject with which he is acquainted. He does not "tempt God" by sparing his own labour. When he is as well equipped for his task as he can make himself, then only does he merit to be chosen as the instrument, the amanuensis, of God. St Luke obtained from the Virgin-Mother all she could tell him of the birth and infancy of Jesus—of her Annunciation, of her Visitation, of the birth of the Baptist. She did not tell him that she "kept all these words in her heart." When St Luke had written his account, he had added, to the delight of our Lady, the words of the Magnificat, Benedictus, etc., which she could not give him, but which came to him quite easily with the rest in writing. It must be remembered that the manner of inspired writing is unknown to us, how it is that the words are given. The writer very likely writes easily and,



as it were, naturally, with the picture of what he is writing about persistently before his eyes, only conscious that the words in which he expresses it are not his own words, and that what he says about it is beyond his own capacity to say.<sup>1</sup>

There is a further pre-condition that appears requisite, and that operates in a similar way.

**And of mental disposition.** Not only has the writer acquaintance with his subject, but he is also chosen to write according to his mental disposition and even to his associations. That also touches upon style. We could not imagine Amos and Daniel writing each other's prophecies. St Matthew is a supreme biographer, but it would be unnatural for him to have written the Gospel of St John; nor could St John without constraint have written that of St Matthew. "There are diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all" (1 Cor. xii. 6). All these considerations must be brought to harmonise with the notion of inspiration and can be brought without difficulty. But to return to the matter of the use of documents.

<sup>1</sup> As has been said, the manner of inspiration is not to be compared with, and need not have the difficulty of, abnormal writing. But even in that, there is some kind of facility acquired with time.

When this is allowed for and accepted, there is greater freedom in the study of Holy Scripture and in its exposition. For example, **The truth of documents.** if the entire Pentateuch has Moses for its author, it does not follow that it is all his original work. The account of the Creation of the World may be original and may have its particular character as being given to its narrator in language suitable to the ideas and intelligence of his time. But it may equally be one of the existing primitive accounts of the Creation that he selects as the most worthy, and that he prefixes to his ante-diluvian narrative under divine direction in the way described. The day and night that existed before there was sun, and the waters above and below the firmament (Gen. i. 5, 7), may be without scientific validity or may be science in primitive phrase, but in the story the truth is expressed of separate creations, and the still higher truth that the world was not created by inferior acons and demiurge (as might be told in some legends) but by the fiat of God Himself—"And God said, Let there be light; and God said, Let us make man" (vv. 3, 26). Similarly, the legends of the pre-Noachian patriarchs would probably be in existence before Moses wrote, and the fuller histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would belong to the family or tribal

records. The contention is not that these things are so, but that they might be so without affecting the inspired character of the books.

The existence of errors in the books of Holy Scripture has been discounted and explanations suggested on an earlier page (77, foll.), the suggestion being that what appear to be errors may not be original but belong to later transcription, or they may be wrongly imagined through our imperfect understanding at this distance of time. Some years ago there was a Bishop of the English Protestant Church, who was a distinguished arithmetician, and who gave up his belief in Christianity, because he could not make the chronology of the Old Testament and its other numerical calculations to be correct; the items when added up did not make the totals given. But the same thing occurs continually in the history of Herodotus. Nothing in ancient documents is so sure to go astray as recorded numbers. They are represented by figures, by letters, and one omitted or wrongly copied throws out the entire account.

Accommodation of the revelation to the intellectual attainment of the time, has been noticed in regard to the account of the Creation in Genesis. Still more clearly, if it had been the sun that stood still at the command of Joshua,

it would have had no effect in lengthening the daylight. It was not the sun's movement in the heavens nor yet the earth's that was stopped, but the revolution of the earth upon its axis. "The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies" (Josh. x. 13), does not describe what really occurred, but is accommodated.<sup>1</sup> May there be accommodation to the writer's individual preconceptions also? It could not be a positive assertion to be made, and the discrepancies are again possibly capable of reconciliation, if we were fully informed. But as a suggestion in default, it is perhaps worth considering whether there might be such a thing. Not so much whether it did happen, as whether it might consistently happen in the process of writing by inspiration. When the matter is of no real importance? In order not to disturb the mind of the writer needlessly?

Thus in his narrative of the Passion St John is very particular in insisting that our Lord was taken "first to Annas" (John xviii. 13). In this he appears to emend St Matthew (and

<sup>1</sup> But it describes the appearance, and what lay behind that is unknown. It would be audacious to assert that the revolution of the earth ceased, when we are not told so. Quite similar is the miraculous sign worked by Isaiah for King Hezekiah (4 [2] Kings xx. 8-11). The shadow went back ten degrees "in the dial of Ahaz." We are told no more.



very probably so intends — him along with others), who had recorded that “they led Jesus away to Caiaphas the high priest” (Matt. xxvi. 57). Apologists may argue that the appearance before Annas being omitted does not deny its having occurred, and that there may have been reasons of discretion for omitting it. (As with many other omissions that are supplied by St John, most strikingly the raising of Lazarus). But it may also be that St Matthew was unacquainted with our Lord’s being taken to Annas.

Or another example of perfectly insignificant detail. One blind man or two blind men cry to Jesus as He is approaching Jericho or as He is leaving it, according to the conflicting accounts of St Matthew (xx. 29, 30) and St Luke (xviii. 36). Some expositors suppose there to have been two occasions, but it is less forced to explain, if the notion is permissible, that the recollection of either Evangelist was different, and it was permitted in his writing.

The idea of accommodation which breaks, as it were, the thread of the inspiration, leads to a further imagination. It cannot be too often said that we are ignorant of what writing by inspiration would be for the writer. Neither the Apostles nor those about them have left us any description of what it was in the pro-

duction of Gospel or Epistle. We can only doubtfully distinguish some perfectly general feature. Supposing that the writing is done without difficulty and proceeds no less easily and smoothly than ordinary writing, perhaps more easily and smoothly. Then the further supposition to be made would not be that of some pages back (p. 170), when the writing is done in compartments, inspired portions alternating with the main production that is uninspired. Nor would it be that the simple style of the composition, where it was simple, determined the narrative or the teaching to be the writer's own. (The portions of the *Gospel* that must either be inspired or else pure invention, exhibit no less simple a style than the rest; there can be no distinguishing between one portion and another in the *Epistle* of St James, which is everywhere simple.)

But if there were places in the Gospel narrative or in the writing of an Epistle, when the writer, though still under divine protection, was left to his own expression, regarding matters of slight importance? For example, are the names of the genealogies of our Lord in St Matthew (i) and St Luke (iii) among things given to the writer, or are they merely taken from the

kingly or family tables of lineage?<sup>1</sup> Are the salutations of Rom. xvi. inspired? Or such a sentence as this (2 Tim. iv. 20): "Erastus stopped at Corinth and I left Trophimus at Miletus sick"? And might there be errors in such places, though not in the writing generally?

The explanation is wrong (see below, p. 222, foll.). Because, in the first place, it is not certain that there are errors anywhere to explain. And then because the Church declares the inspiration of the whole of Scripture. Any uninspired places would thus be non-existent. Unless we might suppose the determination of the Church to be general and to allow for minor differences, or unless "inspiration" might be held to mean something less than its proper sense under some of the conditions attaching to the writing. However, the supposition of extra-inspirational matter equally with that of accommodation seemed deserving of mention, as being so little deflected from the Christian doctrine, and possibly even not to be disallowed or not to incur reprehension.

It should be recognised that such incidental errors as are detected in Holy Scripture are not large nor of serious bearing (unless when the truth of the doctrine or of the history

<sup>1</sup> They may be taken under inspiration. See above, p. 171.

as such is disputed, which becomes another matter).<sup>1</sup> The question might be raised whether

**Supposed** Revelation is concerned with these **errors** *extra materiam*. A kind of parallel distinction is drawn regarding the utterances of the Supreme Pontiff, which may be illustrative of the distinction here proposed. The divine Assistance covenanted to the successors of St Peter renders them infallible in all matters of faith and morals, but not in matters unconnected with either. Might there be any similar limitation regarding the divine Inspiration afforded to the sacred writers? So that they should be infallible in their exposition of divine truth, in their revelation of the divine will and purpose, in their record of sacred history, but anything they wrote incidentally that did not touch upon these topics, would be of another character?

Here again the account appears to be similarly rejected by the highest authority. The incidental matters are in themselves (suppose) not very material, they are matters of indifference; but hardly so in respect of their place in an inspired writing. For if error is admitted to be possible in some particulars,

For example, when it is pretended that the story of the barren fig-tree (above, p. 77) is nothing more than the parable of Luke xiii. 6-9 turned into an actual incident.



it alters the character of the whole; no longer is the truth unquestionable, but a distinction has to be drawn between this and that; we have to decide for ourselves. If it be said that the learned decide for us, the learned are certainly not inspired. If it be said that the Church decides, she does not.

However, any exception or qualification that may be imagined by dubitating critics, will even for them have no extensive field. Whether in its absolute entirety or in its general description, Holy Scripture will be inspired, and that not merely as the minds of the writers are divinely enlightened, or as they are divinely guarded against errors of real concern, but as the words they write are not their own but given to them. How this is accomplished in regard of Divine Inspiration, we do not know and have no description left for us. But it is not necessary to suppose the writing of Scripture to belong to the ordinary manner of writing, so that the writer has no consciousness of anything else than himself cognising the words he uses.

There is another manner of writing, here called "abnormal writing," and many Christian Saints of later times have described themselves as employing that manner in writing their revelations; words may be "heard," they may

be conveyed to the mind's consciousness without audible utterance, to be written down, though the sense is not conceived, though they are out of relation to any mental process. The manner of Divine Inspiration may be separate, and probably is so, like no other manner, but it is just as possible for it to be after the style of abnormal as of ordinary writing. There is nothing in itself strange or inconceivable in the idea of words being conveyed, that is to say, in the idea of the inspiration being verbal.

The character of the writings of Holy Scripture, their style and composition, do not themselves negative the suggestion of such manner of production, which appears to be explicitly asserted by the writers in numerous passages. But the nature of Inspiration is misconceived and a hesitating belief given to the doctrine of the Church, in consequence of ordinary writing being the manner with which Inspiration is compared, as some modification and transcendancy of that, and the abnormal writing being unfamiliar to the expositors, or at least no sufficient consideration being allowed it.

Grant—as pure hypothesis—that writing by Inspiration is according to the method of abnormal writing; then the difficulties and disputings are all of them overcome in the

actual experience of the abnormal writer. Here is a mode of writing in which neither words nor (therefore) ideas are consciously those of the writer, and which proceeds nevertheless, *e.g.*, under the condition of documents being weighed and used. If writing by Inspiration is that mode, the document difficulty does not exist. But if now we drop our hypothesis, we are not obliged to take up instead that of the writing being ordinary. If writing by Inspiration may be denied to be the one, surely it may also be denied to be the other. Being thus a thing in and by itself, the difficulties and disputings of our experience have no application to it. If the incorporation of documents occurs in inspired writing, then it can occur in it, and there is no more to be said.

The use of documents by inspired writers regards the incorporation, whether verbally or in substance, of pre-existing records.

**Misquotation.**

The writer is guided in a supernatural manner in his selections and discards. How is it, then, with quotations from memory? It is pointed out that quotations in the New Testament are frequently inaccurate. Apart from inspiration, the writer would be blamed for not having verified his quotation, if the writing from which he quotes was accessible to him. Quotations that should

be familiar to him, he is alleged to show himself careless or ignorant by giving wrong. Should we not expect that in an inspired writing the quotations would be right, or the writer would verify them?

A celebrated instance is that of Eph. iv. 8: "Therefore he saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." The reference is to Ps. lxvii. (lxviii.) 18: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men." The difference may not be very material; still there is a difference; the quotation is not apparently the true verse. Again in Ps. l. [li.] 4: "That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." This is quoted by St Paul (Rom. iii. 4) as, "That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and overcome when Thou art judged." Our reading of the Hebrew, or equally of the Greek, may be astray, the MS. miscopied. But as our readings stand, the quotation is not what it professes to be; it is not accurately given.

Or it may be explained that St Paul's notion of quoting is not the same as ours. It is rather that he puts what he wants to say in Scripture language than that he adduces texts as confirmatory evidence. Else in the same chapter



of his Epistle to the Romans (vv. 10-18) he strings together verses from several Psalms as one continuous passage, with the words, "It is written," introducing.<sup>1</sup> "He gave gifts to men," and "when Thou art judged," suit better with the argument and context in which the quotations are made. But does that justify the alteration? Does it allow St Paul to write "He saith," or "It is written," when the sentence is not altogether what David said, and St Paul knows it not to be? Or else does St Paul misquote out of ignorance? And how so, if an inspired writer? We should say with our notions that the particular immorality of misquotation was when it is consciously done to make the sentence apply, which would not have applied so well in its proper wording.

The reverse delinquency is when the event is shaped to suit the quotation. It might be thought that error in relating the event was still more decidedly error and would be certainly precluded by inspiration, however it may be with error in quotation. For surely the narrative is given to the inspired writer, even if the accessories are not.

<sup>1</sup> Three verses: "Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known"—are not from any Psalm, but from Is. lix. 7, 8.

One of the extraordinary Messianic prophecies—extraordinary because of the specific detail—is that in Zechariah (ix. 9) “Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh unto thee meek and riding upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass.” It is not meant that the King would ride upon two beasts. The ass and the foal of an ass express the same thing. Just as when St Paul cried out, “I am a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee” (Acts xxiii. 6), he did not make himself two men. But St Matthew (xxi. 2-7) is so sure of the prophecy being literally fulfilled, and does not consider the style of the Hebrew poet-prophet, so that he does not trouble to recall the actual event,<sup>1</sup> but makes Jesus tell the two disciples of the occasion on Palm Sunday that they will “find an ass tied and a colt with her.” And the disciples bring “the ass and the colt” and set Jesus “on them.” We are obliged out of reverence for Holy Scripture to accept the account as it stands. But there are not two occasions, and in St Mark (xi. 2-7) there is only a colt.<sup>2</sup> In St Luke (xix. 29-35) also. It

<sup>1</sup> Or, instead, this may be exactly the blunder of the copyist.

<sup>2</sup> St Mark is very particular and exact in his account, as on some other occasions in his Gospel. The colt is tied “by the door without” and “in a place where two ways meet.” Accordingly it is certain that if he had conceived of there being an ass and a colt, he would have mentioned both,

is to be observed that the other two Evangelists do not quote the prophecy of Zechariah, so that they have nothing on their page with which the event has to be brought into accord. St John (xii. 15) quotes the prophecy as "Thy King cometh sitting on an ass's colt," and there is only "a young ass" in his account. Possibly clearing up St Matthew's language, as in xviii. 13.

A text that has not so much puzzled the commentators as completely nonplussed them, is where St Matthew tells of St Joseph taking up his abode at Nazareth after the return from Egypt with the infant Jesus, and St Matthew adds (ii. 23), "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." No such word is to be discovered anywhere in the Hebrew prophecies as we have them. And the word is not said to have been spoken "by the prophet," but "by the prophets," so that occurring in several places it should be easy to find.

Radbert Paschase, in the middle of the ninth century, finds the reference to be to the "Branch" (Hebr. Nezer) of Is. xi. 1, and Nazareth to be "the town of branches." He is followed by St Thomas and other later commentators. Other prophets speak of Messiah as "the Branch," but use, however, another

word than Nezer. And St Matthew has "Nazarite" (Ναζωραῖος, Hebr. Nazir. See Acts xxiv. 5), not apparently "Nazarene"; also the middle consonants of the two Hebrew words, Nezer and Nazir, are different letters, the one Zain and the other Tzade, so that the words would not be etymologically connected.

It would appear rather less unlikely to make the reference to be to the prophecy of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 26)—"Blessing shall rest upon the head of Joseph and on the head of the Nazarite of his brethren"—which *occurs again* in the prophecy of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 16). The name of Joseph recalls to the Evangelist the ancient patriarch. But anyhow it is rather that an *allusion* is discovered than that a prophecy is fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

These examples of quotation in the New Testament become very illustrative of the various ways in which the surface errors of an inspired writing may be regarded. Thus the misquotations have perhaps a ready explanation, and something of the kind has been attempted regarding each of them. Or they may be viewed as accommodation to the recollection

<sup>1</sup> Not altogether dissimilar is when earlier in the chapter we had Hosea (xi. 1) quoted—"I called My son out of Egypt"—where the prophet's reference is certainly to the exodus under Moses and not to anything that is to come.



of the writer, as, *e.g.*, if St Paul believed "when Thou art judged" to be the words of the Psalm, or if the Psalm, as he knew it, had that reading.<sup>1</sup> Or we may judge that no one of the examples of misquotation represents anything of moment, and that one version or another is no more right or wrong than is the arrangement of words in the sentence or the preference of paper and type. Quotations, as employed by the sacred writers, are perhaps of literary character, at least in some instances, rather than anything belonging to Christian evidence, and their being so employed under inspiration is explicable accordingly.

<sup>1</sup> We have now grown familiar with that version through its occurrence in the Epistle, so that we can pretty well understand. A writer would be startled and think something amiss if he "heard" the quotation as "when Thou judgest." We can thence appreciate the disadvantage of St Paul's so hearing, if he had the same idea of the phrase.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DEVOTION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

THE Apostles of Christ themselves preached the Gospel according to their commission

**How Christ** without need of written record.

**was first** Besides teaching the doctrine of  
**preached.** the Person of Jesus, that He was "the Figure of the Substance of God" (Hebr. i. 3), that there dwelt in Him "the Plenitude of the Godhead in bodily form" (Col. ii. 9), besides teaching the doctrine of salvation through His Blood and resurrection of the bodies of men with His body to eternal life (Is. xxvi. 19), the Apostles were able to tell of Jesus as he lived, they could repeat His discourses and parables, they could describe His looks, not as the sacred Face was impressed on the napkin of St Veronica, but as He was in the happy days of His Galilean ministry.

Even St Paul had in his mind sayings of Christ that have not been recorded in the Gospels. "Remember," he bade the Ephesian presbyters, "the words of the Lord Jesus, how

He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). The Eleven—and there would be other disciples besides—had numberless sayings to recall. And not only unrecorded sayings but unrecorded acts. "If all was told," writes St John, concluding his Gospel, "that Jesus did, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." It was a wonderful grace to be alive at that time and to come into the society of the Apostles of Christ. "Blessed are your ears," Christ said, "for they hear" (Matt. xiii. 16). And blessed too, beyond ourselves, those to whom was repeated what the Apostles had heard, words of God that have now passed into oblivion.

Yet some portion, if it were the will of Christ, might be preserved for future generations. The writing of Gospels is a very simple matter and easily understood. Beloved by His disciples, adored by them, Jesus was the Son of God, who had been born a Man and had lived upon our earth. Some record should be made of Him, before the recollection faded, before those who had been with Him should have passed away. It was not only desirable, it was imperative, and when many were essaying the task (Luke i. 1), those in authority did not overlook this responsibility.

**How  
Gospels  
were  
written.**

The successors of the Apostles in the government of the Church, however carefully and fully instructed ("The things thou hast heard of me," writes St Paul to St Timothy, "commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. ii. 2), were at this disadvantage as compared with the Apostles, that they had no personal recollection. The written Gospel served, in the providence of God, as a second authority, alongside of the tradition ("what thou hast heard of me"), verifying the tradition and supported by it. Similarly in the Epistles, which Apostles had written for the instruction of particular Churches, was preserved the Apostolic teaching *ipsissimis verbis*, to which appeal might be made when question arose of doctrine or of discipline. And the Acts gave account of the first foundation of the Church, as it was understood in its own time.

Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish expectation, and His "beginning" is that He is acknowledged to be the Messiah by **Christian** Galileans and by Jews. "Where **veneration** is He," the Magi inquired, "who is **for the Old** born King of the Jews" (Matt. **Testament.** ii. 2)? Consequently the true fulfilment, had it not been for Jew perversity, was no breach with the former covenant, but the accession of the Gentiles to the Jewish election (Rom. xi. 17),



and the union of Gentile and Jew, the partition wall between them (Eph. ii. 14) being broken down. The Church confessed the Jewish Scriptures to be the word of God according to the Jewish canon. "I came not," said Christ, "to abrogate the law of Moses" (Matt. v. 17). The moral law, given on Sinai, is described, in tremendous terms, to have been "written with the finger of God" (Exod. xxxi. 18), and the Decalogue has received the acknowledgment of civilised peoples since the introduction of Christianity, disputed only by paradox, without attempt to improve or add. "The (Mosaic) Scriptures," wrote St Paul to St Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 15), "are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Further, those Scriptures hold the relation to Christianity, that in them Christians have "the sure word of (Messianic) prophecy" (2 Peter i. 19), and, as Jesus said, "they testify of Me" (John v. 39).

The method by which the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments were written, has been illustrated in the foregoing pages, though it was only a distant and faint apperception, by the method of abnormal writing, which belonged to the revelations of later Saints and which the Saints have themselves described. The doctrine of Inspiration is that the language

**Sanctity  
and  
awe of  
Scripture.**

and not only the sense is inspired. We do not know by what instrumentalities the Saints had their revelations conveyed to them. But it was the Holy Ghost who immediately and directly "spoke by the prophets," and the Apostles of Christ "preached the Gospel by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Peter i. 12). "When the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, is come," said Jesus, "He will bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you" (John xiv. 26). The Holy Ghost brought to the remembrance of the Evangelists the discourses of Jesus which are found in the Gospels, and which could not otherwise have been reproduced in their occasion and context, in their sequence, and in their authentic words. We either have in the Gospels (as some would wish us to suppose) merely the sense of what Jesus spoke, in an arrangement that is factitious; or the words are twice divine, not only such as were spoken by the Son of God, but the Spirit of God also repeated them, that they might be recorded.

Thus the Holy Scriptures are of the utmost sanctity and awe, requiring to be read with the recollectedness of prayer and worship. As the Christian who attends Holy Mass finds himself in the *actual* presence of the Word of God, so when he reads the Holy Gospels, he is in the

presence of the *historic* Personality of Jesus—with adoration, with awe, listening to the beatings of the Sacred Heart. “Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold, how he loved him” (John xi. 35, 36).

In private the Holy Scriptures are read, as the best and highest of all ways of reading, along with religious meditation, whether it be  
**Scripture** about God or about the soul, or  
**reading** whether in order that the reader  
**with** may be better furnished for the  
**meditation.** practice of good works (2 Tim. iii. 17). The passage of Scripture that has been read supplies the theme on which the meditation is composed. Reading with such intention, the reader would not cover much ground each time. A single text may give occasion for many meditations—“I came that they might have life” (John x. 10).

Few have not heard of the “method” of St Ignatius Loyola, which is, however, more flexible than as it is ordinarily understood and explained.<sup>1</sup> St Teresa was under the direction of Fathers of the Society of Jesus, and it is recorded of her, or she records of herself, that

<sup>1</sup> The degradation is unavoidable. The generality of mankind fail to learn without some clear formula being supplied them. But the more learned Jesuits in their direction have always faithfully reflected, so far as suitable, the indulgent allowance of the Saint.

she was unable (being a "dull and stupid" person) to practise the method except along with reading a passage of Scripture.

Ancillary to this use of Scripture, preparatory to its exercise, or even, it may be said, another manner of it, perhaps a better sort, is critical study. Religious meditation, with little critical appreciation or with none, may be perfectly innocent, without danger to faith, as will presently appear. But it can hardly be as fruitful, when it is generated from a Scripture text and the Scripture text has reference to an entirely different matter from that in which the meditation proceeds. Thus the preacher in a mission told how he had many penitents and how he had been consoled as he left the church with the thought that there was "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner doing penance," and he could see many about the church who were evidently engaged in doing it. This of course an item in the mission sermon of the day after. But the text the preacher had in mind made no reference to doing penance but to repenting, no reference to what occurs after confession to a priest, but to the disposition that must exist before the confessional is entered.

We must not imagine that the meaning of



Holy Scripture is plain and on the surface, so that the most simple may read without likelihood of mistake. This notion is the error of Protestantism, according to which every Christian finds his religion in the Bible for himself. As a result there exists more than a hundred opposing Protestant creeds in England. Apparently, then, the Bible also in a hundred opposing versions!

Critical study, as it may be practised by the Christian, is intended, no doubt, to reach a fuller understanding of what is read for the assistance of future meditation, so that the beauty and consolation—nay, the terror also—of the revealed word may be more fully known. But, primarily and in itself, the critical study is a different thing from the meditation that may attend upon it. It does not pause—or at least not with every step—to elaborate the theme that is given; it has as its aim first to distinguish the proper meaning, to appreciate the connection, to learn. To learn, to acquire better proficiency in the study of Scripture. As he who would learn history might apply himself to the pages of Thucydides, or as the learner of logic might go to the *Posterior Analytics* of Aristotle. Nevertheless there is thought and reflection needed all along, which may often have a religious cast.

**Collation  
of texts.**

An incident, a succession of events, is to be understood; an expression of doctrine is to be distinguished and its connections and qualifications ascertained. The student does what he can by weighing the words, by considering the occasion and context, by comparing any similar place of Scripture that may be discovered by pains or that may be recollected by thinking. So much is within the opportunity of everyone. If there is nothing more, the study will be meritorious, and will have its own gratification and profit. It will have gratification for more people than might be supposed, and for more than would themselves suppose it. It is only a more attentive and laborious performance of what the reading of Holy Scripture must always be, for he who reads must try to understand. And the reading of Holy Scripture is recommended not to a select and cultivated few, nor to a larger number, to most, but it is recommended to all.

Critical study is no doubt precarious and slow and entails unnecessary labour, when it is unassisted study. The marvelous Consultation of Humphry Davy when a boy authorities. is said to have constructed a watch, without knowing that there were such things already existing. Even with his cleverness a clumsy watch, and occupying a hundredfold the

time and labour the watchmaker gives to a much better and handier watch. Any scientific study properly begins where other students have left off and availing itself of the contributions that they have made. Accordingly the critical student of Holy Scriptures possesses himself of such aid as is within his reach through the labours of learned persons, whether as determining among different readings of the text,<sup>1</sup> or as establishing the meaning of the words employed in the age of the writers or in the style of the particular writer; as reconciling the difficulties of the narrative or elucidating an obscure passage by argument and analysis; or finally, as employing extraneous materials, the statement of secular writers who were contemporary with the events, the contributions of historical, ethnographical, and geographical advances—materials that are the exclusive possession of the learned.

<sup>1</sup> The relation of ecclesiastical determination to the text of Holy Scripture should not be misunderstood. When the Vulgate was made the authorised version, it was not meant that every word, not that every sentence, was the true and best rendering of the Hebrew or Greek. Only that the Vulgate might be sufficiently relied upon for the truth of fact or of doctrine, and that the Church does not similarly allow of any other version. When 1 John v. 7 is included in the *textus receptus* it does not decide (positively) that the verse is authentic, but that the sense is orthodox and that the verse may not be asserted (negatively) to be unauthentic.

Undeniably all have not the opportunity of such assistance and those who have, in **The general** however limited measure, should **oppor-** first before all else offer gratitude **tunity.** to God. "Critical" is an alarming word. But, if all should read the Scriptures, it is certain that all should read with intelligence and that to do so is within the power of all. And so much assistance every Christian starts with, and gives God thanks for, that he has been taught his religion. Though linguistic, historical, and archaeological proficiency, though theological and philosophical competence, though acquaintance with the writings of the learned, is helpful and makes possible a better and readier understanding, yet these are things that can be done without, and their absence does not make the Bible a forbidden book. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture. And the best intelligence of Scripture is given to a simple and sincere mind. "I confess to Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes" (Matt. xi. 25).

Nor should there be any danger of perversion (such as is seen in the divergencies of Protestantism) in reading the books of Scripture, or at least those of the New Testament, with



a Christian disposition. For the Christian is assured that if he thinks himself to have met with anything different from the doctrine he has been taught, it is not really so, but somewhere there lies an error. He is not so foolish as to set up his own opinion (though Luther did) against the faith of Christendom, let alone the consensus of learned and holy men, of men belonging to various times and making a large company, who have assisted in the determination and expression of the Church's doctrine. He takes it as certain that the truth lies with the Church, unexceptionable and inexpugnable. The word of God which is read in Holy Scripture is also vocal in the Church. The word of God is the same, written or spoken. "God is not a God of inconsistency."

The *Providentissimus Deus* of Leo XIII. is the last word of Catholic authority that applies.

**The Prov.** Should it be considered that the  
**Deus: its** Pope gives in it his determination  
**authority** for the entire Church of a matter  
**and style.** of faith, and would it then be of infallible validity by the Divine Assistance, as defined by the Council of the Vatican? Or is it only a direction for fuller and more definite teaching of Holy Scripture within seminaries? At any rate it must be received with utmost

deference, both for the Office and for the man. It is not an essential matter for the occupant of the Holy See, that he should have wide intellectual sympathies and be a scholar. But Leo XIII. was a scholar. Moreover, it is very papal, it is of saintly example, that the authority of the Encyclical as composed is not allowed to rest upon the Pope's own decision. No papal publication ever issued has appealed more continuously to the interpretations and sentences of the primitive Fathers, "who, after the Apostles, were those who planted and who watered, the builders, pastors, and nursing-fathers of the Church" (St Aug. *c. Julian.* ii. 10, 37—quoted). The Encyclical is not Leo's doctrine, but Leo's patristic learning. Its face design is to recall the belief and practice of former times and to regret that there is no longer the same observance, that there is a falling off, a less persistent zeal; to ordain that amendment should be set about with all promptitude and diligence.

The chief concern is with the course of education in seminaries, that the future clergy

**The Bible** should be versed in the knowledge  
**in Semin-** of Scripture, their minds stored  
**aries.** with Scripture quotations. "It is a wrong-headed and unintelligent way of going to work, to preach about religion and to

enunciate divine precepts, while employing the language of human science, intellectual and moral, alone, the preacher relying on his own arguments rather than on those that are divine. Such sermons, however brilliant, have necessarily but a languid and lukewarm interest, as lacking the fire of the Word of God, and they must be very far behind the power of the divine Word; 'for the Word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword and reaching to the division of soul and spirit' (Hebr. iv. 12)."

But the study of Scripture is enjoined upon all Christians. "We will and desire that more should duly undertake and constantly maintain the defence (*patrocinium*) of the divine Writings. . . .

**For general  
reading.**

By the example of Christ and His Apostles all should learn, especially clerical recruits [but not only they], what exceeding value they should give to the divine Writings, with what zeal and devotion they should go, as it were, to the armoury of the faith." For "St Jerome (*in Is. Prol.*) rightly says that 'ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.'" (As there is no one, we may suppose, clerical or lay, who can afford to be ignorant of Christ, so all must be urged to the Study of Scripture.) In the Gospel "the living and breathing image of

Christ is exhibited in a wonderful way for the alleviation of our ills, the encouragement of virtue, and inviting us to the love of God." The Church has ever shown herself anxious for the study of Scripture, in her institutions, in her liturgy, and in the example of her Saints.

The Pope instructs us in what spirit the study should be pursued. "Finally all alike, both teachers and taught (*alumnos et administros Ecclesiae*), we admonish affectionately as a father that they should always approach the Sacred Writings with the utmost reverence and piety. For we cannot by any possibility discover the meaning of the Writings as we need for our good, unless we put away the pride of *earthly* science and kindle in holy fashion within us the desire of that wisdom *which is from above*." Again, on an earlier page. "Those Books are not to be considered like ordinary books, but since they are dictated by the Holy Spirit Himself, and contain matters of most serious moment, matters often of recondite meaning and hard to comprehend, we need always *the advent of the same Spirit* (St Jer. in *Mic.* i. 10), *i.e.*, we need His illumination and grace; which, as the divine Psalmist repeatedly enjoins, we must entreat by humble prayer and guard by holiness of life."



What is enjoined is not the reading but the study of Scripture. Or (it means) the reading should be of an intelligent sort.

**Critical study.**

The study is critical, though not of the kind that is dignified by the name of the "higher" criticism (*nomine honestatum criticae sublimioris*). In regard of such study, it was ordered by the Council of Trent that the Vulgate version of the Scriptures should be taken as "authentic in Biblical readings, disputings, preachings, and expoundings," and that order must be obeyed. Nevertheless due consideration should be given to other versions that Christian antiquity has commended and preserved, especially to the earliest codices. For although the general sense of the Hebrew and Greek sufficiently appears in the Vulgate translation, still, where anything is ambiguously or indistinctly expressed in the Vulgate, there, says St Augustine (*De doct. chr.* iii. 4), "a reference to the original will be of service." Accordingly a knowledge of the original languages is advisable, and for any Professor of Scriptural Exegesis it is indispensable.

In general the interpretations of the Primitive Fathers are to be maintained, and the literal and first-hand sense of a passage should sparingly be discarded. Nevertheless a large field lies open to private and

**Its scope.**

individual enterprise and the Church will reap the benefit. There are passages of Scripture that have not yet received a precise or definite exposition, passages that may be more clearly or more intimately expounded, others that may be more successfully vindicated than has yet been done against their assailants. Individual labour prepares the ground and the judgment of the Church in due course succeeds. The student is bound by the interpretation of antiquity. But not altogether. Where there seems good reason, let him not be afraid to go beyond (*ubi justa cause adfuerit, inquirendo et exponendo vel ultra procedat*).

As regards the sub-Apostolic Fathers, when they are all in one story, their interpretation becomes of great authority, as it may be surmised to have been obtained from the Apostolic writers themselves. Later orthodox expositors have not that precellent recommendation, but still their conclusions are entitled to all respect. Even help may be obtained from heretical commentaries, if used with caution, and not forgetting that the true sense of Scripture is not to be discovered outside the Church (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* vii. 16; Orig. *de princ.* iv. 8; in *Levit. hom.* 4, 8; Tertull. *de praescr.* 15, sq.; S. Hilar. *Pict. in Mat.* 13, 1).

**Various  
authority.**

The study should be an instructed study, and the Introduction to the Bible (*Introductio Prepara- Biblica*) must not be neglected. **tory** The student is taught to under-  
**instruction.** stand the divine authenticity of what he reads, and the difference between a true and false way of reading. The lesson belongs to the simplest Christian education, but is treated scientifically in books on the subject. There are undeniably perplexities in the Bible, in the elucidation of which, in reflection upon which, guidance is needed. The Fathers held difficulties to exist by the permission or the providence of God, that we might be stimulated to give more attention to the reading and have our minds more impressed by what we read. The appointed guidance is that of the Church.

Holy Scripture is of palmary theological value. Holy Scripture should permeate all theology and **Precedence** be the soul of it. So have taught  
**of Holy** the most illustrious Fathers and  
**Scripture.** theologians, and what they teach they exemplify in their own practice, they establish the doctrine of the Church, and refute the novelties of heretics, from the Divine Writings no less than from the Tradition of the oral teaching of Apostles; the Writings occupy a pre-eminent position among the sources from which the Divine Revelation is obtained;

it is unworthy treatment unless the Writings are perseveringly studied and put to use.

Philosophy and logic are taught in seminaries, and rightly ; nevertheless the proof of Christian doctrine is to be sought preferentially in Holy Scripture. "For theology does not get its principles from other sciences, but has them immediately by revelation from God, and therefore theology does not receive from other sciences as higher, but employs them as its inferiors and handmaids" (St Thos. Aq. *Summa theol.* p. i. 9, 1, a. 5-12). Professors of physical science intrude into the domain of philosophy and make stupid objections ; they may be left to the philosophers to refute. Historical professors display a simple faith in ancient documents of a secular description, as if there could be no doubt about them ; while they reject any book of Scripture on the first appearance of error without examining further.

The conflict the Church has to sustain is changed. In a former generation she was

**Catholic  
loyalty.**

concerned with people who repudiated her doctrine and the witness of tradition, and declared Holy Scripture to be the sole source of revelation and the supreme arbiter (assisted by their private judgment) of faith. To-day she is concerned with their lineal descendants, the



Rationalists, people no less relying upon their own opinion, but utterly renouncing the last remains of Christian faith which their fathers cherished, the ancient Protestant belief in the Bible. A love of Holy Scripture, a devotion to Holy Scripture, the study of Holy Scripture, is demanded as well of the loyalty as of the spiritual interests of Churchmen.

## CHAPTER X

### THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

AT the end of the account of Inspiration that the preceding pages have supplied, it is possible that some readers feel themselves to have been unduly hurried. The argument passed from topic to topic, without pause for collating divergent opinions of the orthodox, and without recitations of the definitions of the Church that applied. The apology must be that a more learned treatment is not acceptable and with such treatment the book is left to lie on the shelf. The larger number are frightened away by the first suggestion of technical theology. They may be invited to close the book, when this chapter faces them.

On the main topic, the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, Catholic doctrine is clear and definite, and there is no likelihood of the Church modifying her doctrine, so as to make any sort of concession to modern criticism, to physical, ethnographical, and historical discovery, to

**The  
doctrine  
clear and  
definite.**

literary learning, which renders impossible—so people say—the maintenance of the ancient belief that the Bible is every word of it inspired, because it is now placed beyond doubt that the Bible is not every word of it true. But the Church has declared her belief in the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, and the Church does not go back upon her declarations. It is thought that the credibility of the Bible being undermined, Protestantism must collapse, which was founded upon it. Much more must the Church in that event collapse. She has repeatedly and absolutely in every age, down to the most modern time, declared the Scriptures to be of divine origin and to be true in every part. And she is founded upon her infallibility.

The first successors of the Apostles use no uncertain language about the Inspiration of Scripture. St Clement of Rome (Ep. i. c. 45) writes: "Study the Scriptures, which are true utterances of the Holy Ghost." St Chrysostom (*In Genes.*, hom. 21, n. 1) in a similar connection: "The Scriptures, as being written by the Spirit, contain a vast hidden treasure."<sup>1</sup> These are

<sup>1</sup> The continuation is singularly appropriate to the argument of our preceding chapter: "If in our ordinary concerns," writes the Saint, "human writings, frequently writings impaired by the ravages of time owing to the early date of their production, if in such writings great importance may attach to

what would be called very uncompromising expressions—"utterances (ῥήσεις) of the Holy Ghost," and "written by the Spirit (Πνεύματι γεγραμμένοι)." St Augustine (Serm. IV. in Ps. 90) uses a very plain and perspicuous image beyond evasion—the Scriptures are "the Epistle of Almighty God to His creatures." Pope Leo XIII. (*Providentissimus Deus*), alluding to the phrase, makes it "a letter addressed by our Heavenly Father to the human race and conveyed to them by the sacred writers, the race being far away from their native country."

After the patristic age, the Council of Florence has: "The holy Roman Church declares God to be the Author of the Old Testament and of the New, that is, of the Law and the Prophets and of the Gospel, inasmuch as holy men of either Testament spoke under inspiration of the same Holy Spirit." And the modern Vatican Council: "The Church holds them (the books of the Old and New Testaments) for holy and

the determination of a single syllable, much more is the same to be said of our examination of the divine Scriptures, which were written by the Holy Ghost, if only we go soberly to work, if we are not satisfied with a cursory perusal but give our best attention and examine everything with minutest care, if, in a word, we do not come behind our friends who show so much zeal and diligence in the concerns of this world."



canonical, not as having been the work of unassisted human industry which is afterwards approved by authority, nor yet as containing indefectibly the divine revelation, but for the reason that being written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost the books have God for their Author, and as such are delivered (*traditi*) to the Church herself." This is Plenary Inspiration beyond any mistaking. When such is the speech of General Councils, no one can say it is exceeding the Catholic doctrine or being more Roman than Rome, however strictly and literally the operation of the Holy Ghost is represented to be concerned in the production of the Sacred Writings. As the Nicene Creed expressed the case—not "the prophets spoke by the Holy Ghost," but "the Holy Ghost spoke by the prophets." The Holy Ghost is the Speaker; the words are His. St Augustine had also written (*De. Gen. ad litt.* ii. 9, 20) of "the Spirit of God who spoke by them," i.e., the Sacred Writers, and St Gregory the Great (*Praef. in Job*, n. 2) observes that "the Holy Ghost Himself wrote the things, as He dictated them (*Ipse hanc scripsit quae scribenda dictavit*)."

But among the statements of the present elucidation, what disturbs more particularly the minds of theologians of moderate attain-

ment (a little theology is an anxious thing), what crosses the conclusions of critics and

**Apostolic  
writings  
not in-  
spired as  
such.**

apologists alike, is when the Canon of Scripture is denied to rest on the approval and acceptance of the Church, which appeared to the critics to be the "natural" and "historical" account, and which was always the Catholic formula for things of that kind. The above quotation from the Vatican Council, however, has its own doctrine, and the wording may be profitably weighed ("not as having been the work of unassisted human industry, which is afterwards approved by authority," etc.).

Cardinal Franzelin (*De divina Traditione et Scriptura*, p. 323, Ed. 1870) distinguishes: "We assert that the Apostolic office is no *positive* criterion of inspiration in writing. . . . From their having the Apostolic gift it does indeed follow that the Apostles, if they wished to commit the revealed doctrine to writing, would be infallible in writing equally as in preaching the doctrine of Christ. But it does not result from the Apostolic office, regarded in itself, that the writing is inspired, nor does it result that the Apostles *could not* have written things unconnected with the doctrine of Christ, in regard of which not only were they not inspired but were not infallible either. From

the *authenticity*, therefore, of an Apostolic book there results indeed the divinity of the doctrine revealed, as set forth in it, and the infallibility of the writer in setting forth and in writing such doctrine, but it does not follow because the book is authentic and has an Apostle for its author, that it is therefore an inspired book." This passage clearly rejects the notion of the New Testament writings consisting of the extant remains of Apostles, which at a subsequent period were reckoned to be Scripture and to be inspired, and the ground of their inspiration being solely that they were the work of Apostles. And there is no theological writer of greater eminence and authority than Franzelin in modern times.

He writes further (p. 339): "Concerning the inspiration of these books"—those of the New Testament—"if the question is not of some New Testament writings being inspired"—as in 2 Peter iii. 16—"but of the entire collection, of the books composing the New Testament all and singular, no attestation to that effect is found in any existing Apostolic writing. Accordingly the inspiration of the books of Scripture, which Protestants also have in their canon, the inspiration of all the books, cannot be established unless by divine attestation that *tradition alone* preserves."

But the divine attestation which is so *preserved*, does not so originate. "The belief in the *Holy Scriptures* and their acceptance by **Nor by the** the universal Church being the **Church's** question, it is clear that the divine **acceptance.** attestation regarding this Scripture belongs to the deposit of the Catholic revelation. But the Catholic revelation is complete as conveyed by Christ and by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Therefore this attestation, this revelation, about Scripture and about the books of Scripture being inspired, cannot be given to the Church in any subsequent age, but must of necessity come to the Church from the Apostles themselves" (p. 335—a very pretty syllogism). This is plainly what has been asserted in the exposition of our previous chapters (see p. 16, foll.), that the determination or tradition of the Church is not originally concerned in the matter. The attestation of the inspiration of the books of the New Testament, the determination of the Canon, is obtained "from the Apostles themselves," that is to say, directly from the actual writers of the books. A Gospel is offered to the Church as written, according to the statement of the Evangelist, by dictation of the Holy Ghost. An Epistle is conveyed to Corinth as being a divine composition; what is written in it the Corinthians



will find to be "the commandments of the Lord."

Moreover, the sacred writers are probably themselves conscious of their inspiration.

**The** "Just as in the gift of prophetic  
**writers** speech, which St Thomas and  
**consciously** other theologians distinguish from  
**inspired.** full prophecy, so in regard to  
inspired writing, it does not appear to be  
essential that the writer should be conscious  
of his being inspired by God. Notwith-  
standing, it is not readily to be allowed that  
as a matter of fact in the case of any one of  
the sacred writers his inspiration was unknown  
to him" (Franzelin, p. 308). There is at  
any rate nothing inadmissible in what has  
appeared on our page in this connection. So  
far, it is hoped, those who interest themselves  
in theological argument are reassured. Our  
extremest and most disturbing suggestions are  
accepted or are lent some support, the suggestion  
that the formation of the Canon was not the  
result of the later action of the Church, and  
the suggestion that the inspired writers were  
themselves conscious of their inspiration in  
writing.

Our belief in the latter proposition is made  
more sure, or even such belief is necessitated,  
when we hold the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration,

the doctrine that not only what they were to write but the words in which they were to write it, belonged to the inspiration of the sacred writers. When their writing was so done, and to the extent to which it was so done, it must be allowed that it would not be the manner of ordinary writing, and the writers would be conscious of a difference, that is to say, they would be conscious in writing of being inspired writers.

The doctrine of Verbal Inspiration is approved by the Church. Whether it is approved in its full sense, without limitation and distinction, or only in some specially distinguished sense and in measure and degree that authority has assigned, may be left to the judgment of the reader. St Augustine, who called Holy Scripture an Epistle from God, writes elsewhere (*De. cons. Evangelist.* 1. i. n. 54): "Anyone who understands the condition of unity (*unitatis consortium*) existing between the head and the members, will receive what he reads in the Gospel, what is there narrated by disciples of Christ, with precisely the same feeling as if he had seen God's actual hand writing it."

Philo is not a Christian witness. But what he holds regarding Inspiration will be representative of the ideas of Jews of the Christian era.

Philo is a Platonist and a mystic. But would the doctrine of Gamaliel be different from his?

**The** According to Philo (*De vita Moysis*,  
**doctrine of** I. ii.) the translators of the Septua-  
**Philo.** gint Version produced a translation verbally identical as done by everyone of them, "as if with an invisible prompter uttering the words (ἐνῆχοῦντος) for each." We are not concerned with the truth of the account of the production of the Septuagint. But we are concerned with this, that in connection with an inspired writing Philo supposed the case of those concerned being verbally inspired. If the translator, surely then, conceivably to Philo, the original writer. Philo also writes (*De Monarchia*, I. ii.) of the Jewish prophet as "saying nothing of his own, but as if another was prompting him; he who is truly inspired is unable to comprehend what he is himself saying; the prophets are interpreters for God, who uses their voices as mere instruments to express what He chooses." If in spoken prophecy, surely also in written revelation. The Apostles, then, the Jews of the Apostolic age, may conceive of Inspiration in the manner of Philo.

Franzelin will not have the notion of Inspiration to be satisfied by the divine assistance and security against error. "Inspiration has been

shown to be the action of God upon men and the books of Scripture to be the work of inspired men, in such sense that God is to be believed the Author of the books. But if it was that the divine assistance only precluded error, and the men wrote the books otherwise of themselves, God would not be the Author of the books. . . . If, *e.g.*, St Luke (and the same may be said of other narratives or moral teachings to be found in the Bible) told in the Acts of the doings of St Paul and others only so far as he knew about them by his human knowledge, and God only prevented errors occurring, then the record as such is not that of God but a human record, although in consequence of the divine assistance it is infallibly certain that the facts are as narrated (p. 313)." He *deduces* (p. 300) the verbal character of Inspiration from the doctrine of the Church. "It is easy to show that a divine working such as to extend to the writing itself (*signa*) is implied in the very notion of Inspiration, in which God is the Author of a book. For, first of all, the meaning of writing is to find words expressing the ideas intended and to write them down (*consignatio*). If therefore by Inspiration is meant no more than the illumination of the mind and the influencing of the will,



then God will be the Author of the intelligence and of the will supplied, not necessarily of the writing, which, as writing, may be purely human. But in Inspiration not only the ideas but the writing of them is to be the work of God . . . for Scripture is the *Word* of God (*dixit Deus ipsam Scripturam*)."<sup>1</sup> The argument in these passages of the distinguished theologian is close and cogent and appears impossible to evade, given the common belief in the divine authorship of Scripture. Without Verbal Inspiration, the *writing* must not be said to be inspired at all; we have not inspired writings in Scripture, but only the writings of men differing from others in the graces bestowed upon them, with illuminated minds and free from the human liability to error. The mind of Plato seems also illuminated beyond the common measure, and Shakspeare is "never wrong." When we grant that the sacred writers have such character specially and by *divine* grace, still it is the *men* that are on a different footing, the *writings* are equally the work of the one sort of men or of the other sort. Scripture, the written word, is not divine unless verbally inspired.

<sup>1</sup> The English expression is less forcible than the Latin, in which the same word is employed both for "writing" and for "Scripture," and there is consequently always the double meaning.

Franzelin, however, distinguishes that verbal inspiration need only be supposed when the words belong essentially (*formaliter*) to the meaning, not when the meaning may be expressed in more than one way. He quotes the language of Suarez (*De Fide*, disp. v., sec. 3, n. 4, 5): "I affirm that the words of Scripture are from the Holy Ghost in two ways, by special precedent suggestion or simply by assistance and as it were safe-guarding. . . . It does not appear to be necessary—though some of the modern learned so insist—that the words should always be dictated in the former way. For when a canonical author writes anything that is within the range of human intelligence, it seems enough that the Spirit should specially aid him and guard him against error and untruth . . . allowing him otherwise to rely on his own recollection. . . . It is enough, if in the one way or in the other, according as the subject demands, the words are from the Holy Ghost." Franzelin not only demonstrates this distinction "negatively," but he thinks he proves it affirmatively by examples of differences in the Gospel, *e.g.*, in the words of institution of the Eucharist. The example is not very happily chosen.

However, we observe that verbal inspiration is determined to belong to the Apostolic writings,

as such conclusion follows by logical necessity from the definition of the Church. And we also observe that learned men of the age of Suarez held it to belong to the whole of the Apostolic writings. But discrepancies are discovered on comparing together some passages of the Gospels, and this is argued to afford *positive* proof that the inspiration of the writers is not always verbal, but that they are on occasion left to their own recollection and intelligence with no more than assistance and safe-guarding in their task.

But now the *Providentissimus Deus* forbids the assertion of the existence of discrepancies in

**Prohibition** the Gospels, in which verbal error,  
**of the Provi-** if nothing more, must attach to one  
**dentissimus** or other of the varying accounts.  
**Deus.**

Rather is explanation of the apparent discrepancies to be devoutly sought. "It may happen that errors have been introduced by copyists; or a passage is not properly understood." In any case "it is absolutely forbidden (*nefas omnino*) either to confine the inspiration of Holy Scripture to certain portions, or to allow that the sacred writers have written error. Nor is it an admissible (*toleranda*) theory that divine inspiration belongs to matters of faith and morals and nothing besides. . . . The books which the Church receives as sacred and

canonical were written all of them in all their portions by dictation [*sic*] of the Holy Ghost. . . . It does not make an atom of difference that the Holy Ghost has employed the instrumentality of men in the writing, as though error might enter, not indeed from the divine Author but still from the inspired writers. For He set them and moved them Himself to write by superhuman power, and He stood by them in their writing, so that they should perfectly conceive in their mind and will to write down, and should suitably and with infallible accuracy express, all those things and those things alone that He bade them; only so is He the Author of Scripture in its entirety. . . . It follows that those who imagine anything erroneous to exist by any possibility in authentic passages of the Sacred Books, either misrepresent the Catholic doctrine, or make God Himself the Author of error."

These sentences are very clear and explicit. "The Catholic doctrine" seems not to be that expressed by Franzelin on this point. The distinction he draws—and others before and after him—between passages that are inspired verbally and others that have only the divine assistance in their writing, must be held to be condemned by the *Providentissimus Deus*, or at least the contrary opinion, which supposes one and the same inspiration to belong to



every book and every passage, becomes now admissible; if discrepancies are denied, if the supposed instances in which error occurs are determined to be non-existent, our main reason is therewith gone for excepting verbal inspiration anywhere at all, from any portion of any book.

The Encyclical allows no kind of difference in inspiration, or expresses none. The inspiration

**Only one  
Inspiration.** of Scripture extends to all the books and to the whole of every book, all being the work of God and error excluded. This is presented as no newly-imposed doctrine that the Encyclical inaugurates, but it is "the ancient and constant belief of the Church, that was solemnly defined by the Councils of Florence and of Trent, and was finally confirmed and more expressly declared by the Vatican Council. It has been held by the Fathers of the Church from all time"—as, *e.g.*, by SS. Augustine and Gregory the Great, whose language is quoted.

**Objections  
to the  
contrary  
opinion:  
private  
judgment.** The objection that may most readily be taken to the doctrine of Franzelin, is that if once a lesser inspiration is admitted, as, *e.g.*, divine assistance and safe-guarding instead of verbal dictation, there is the difficulty of determining the limits of its application to the Sacred Writings, and this must

either be done by authority—a large undertaking that has been hitherto unattempted—or else the exercise of individual opinion that would result is un-Catholic.

Further, if the writers are conscious of their inspiration—and it is admitted that such may **In and out** be the case with the Apostolic **illumina-** writers, and it certainly is with **tion.** the ancient Hebrew prophets—what would that mean? Surely that they are not expressing their own ideas and that their mental activity is in abeyance during the writing. But does then the mind of the writer come into activity and again subside in the same writing and even upon the same page? The doctrine of Verbal Inspiration in and by itself is easy of belief as compared with any such imagination.

Franzelin does not seem to have considered occasions in the Gospel narrative in which **Insecurity of the sayings of Christ.** spoken words are recorded which were not and could not be within the recollection or knowledge of the writer (above, Ch. II.). And these occasions being spread over a considerable portion of the narrative and including passages that manifest as great or greater discrepancy than is supposed to be discoverable in the words of institution of the Eucharist.

Are the discourses of our Lord to be considered verbally given, or are they only according to the writer's recollection? If Franzelin intended verbal inspiration to be present in these portions of the Gospel, it may be thought that he would have made particular mention of them, as naturally occurring to the mind, and would have taken pains to explain how their case differs from that of the supposed divergence in the words of institution of the Eucharist as recorded. Meanwhile we may feel quite certain, from the course of the argument of the *Providentissimus Deus*, that it was not intended by Leo XIII. that we should consider the discourses of our Lord to be only substantially His, guarded indeed by the divine assistance against being seriously misrepresented, but otherwise according to the imperfect and varying recollection of the Evangelists.

"God being the Author of the Sacred Books," says the *Providentissimus Deus*, "as also of the doctrine committed to the Church, a meaning cannot be extracted from the books fairly interpreted which conflicts with the doctrine. So that we must obviously reject as foolish and utterly untrue the notion of there being either discrepancies existing among the inspired writers themselves or contradiction of the doctrine of the Church." Equally as

when the language of Scripture appears to be at variance with science or with history.

If complete reconciliation cannot be achieved, we must not give the Bible up; "since truth

**The use of accom-** cannot conflict with truth, it follows  
**modation.** that a mistake has been made, either in interpreting the words of Scripture or on the other side." But it is admissible to suppose accommodation to human understanding and to the prevailing conditions of human knowledge. "The sacred writers, or, more properly speaking, the Spirit of God who spoke by them, did not will to give men information about the constitution of the visible universe, which would not help the salvation of anyone (St. Aug. *De Gen. ad litt.* ii. 9, 20); accordingly the writers use the language of their day, just as people do in our time, even scientific men. In common speech the sensible appearance is what is expressed, and so the sacred writer (as the Angelic Doctor instructs us, *Summa*, p. i. q. lxx. n. 1-3) 'does not go beyond what appears to the senses'; in other words, God, speaking to men, expresses Himself in human manner to suit their understanding."

This explanation might perhaps be applied not only when the language of Scripture conflicts with the apparent facts of science, but



also when different narratives of the same event in Scripture are thought to conflict with one another, as was suggested, but without being allowed, in our exposition. It is to be observed that the Encyclical does not itself so apply the explanation it offers. The conclusion is that of St Augustine (*De doct. chr.* iii. 9, 18), as quoted: "Better it is to be beaten by a text than to interpret it amiss; we escape from the yoke of authority and run into the snare of error." Or as the same Augustine says elsewhere (*Ep.* lxxxii. 1, etc.): "To the books of Scripture which are pronounced canonical I have learnt to give such reverence and honour, that I most firmly believe no one of the authors to have written any error. If I meet with anything in the writings that appears contrary to the truth, I shall not hesitate to conclude that either the text is corrupt, or the passage misunderstood, or I have blundered."



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